

# **GROUPED IN GROUPS**

## **A Practical Approach to World Evangelism**

BY

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**Dedicated to**

**Martha**

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## PREFACE

The mission emphasis and work of the church today is stronger than it has ever been since the first century. Mission mindedness seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. And it should. We have played around with this, the work of the church, for so long that it is time we perked up our hearts and became concerned about a lost and hell-bound world outside the borders of the United States.

The world's population is growing and growing. We're already past the four billion mark. And the world population is rapidly rushing toward that five billion mark at a rate of eighty million people a year. The world is actually being saturated with eternal souls, souls which must be evangelized. And we must evangelize them, not our children, nor our grandchildren. Our descendants will have the responsibility of evangelizing their generations. The responsibility of evangelizing this generation of souls is ours. And we can do it if we want to. The "we-can-evangelize-the-world-in-our-own-generation" is not just an optimistic slogan of dream-headed missionaries. It can be a reality if we have the faith. We can do it. After all, "if God be for us, who can be against us"? We must take Christ into all the world if we are to bring the world into Christ. That is our purpose.

It is as a result of the above sentiments that this book has been written. If we are going to evangelize effectively, we must use our most effective tools. Team or group evangelism is one of those effective tools. And we must use it. But as I will remind you throughout this book, there are several ways to use group evangelism in evangelizing the world. This book, by no means, is a final word on the subject. In fact, as we perfect the method we will have to continue writing on the subject.

As brother Shipp points out in his introduction, there is a great void of literature in the church on this subject. In mis-

sion books in general, there are few books to be found on the subject of team evangelism. And actually, missionaries of the church are the only ones who can give a truly Biblical view of team evangelism. Denominational groups have cluttered their mission efforts with so many organizational machines that it is more than difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff in their works. They are often more concerned about promoting some scripturally unauthorized organizational structure than in propagating "their gospel." We should never let that happen in the church, never!

I appreciate very much brother Shipp's introduction. Glover has strenuously labored in the past to encourage brethren to get involved in foreign mission work. While in the States, prior to 1968, he became so involved in talking about missionaries that he just decided to become one. And that he has successfully been since he moved to Belo Horizonte, Brazil in 1968 with a team of missionaries. That effort continues today. And may we have a hundredfold of such efforts in the years to come. We can evangelize the world. And we can do it in our generation. Team evangelism offers one of the greatest hopes of doing such.

We must get involved in missions. We must become concerned and convicted about carrying Christ to every continent and country and culture. Those first century Christians went forth with fire in their hearts and the Word of God on their tongues. They evangelized the world in their generation. Their message went unto the ends of the world. And wouldn't it be great if historians would write concerning our generation the same words that were written concerning the generation of Christians immediately following the Pentecost incident of Acts 2:

*Their sound went out into all the earth,  
And their words unto the ends of the world.*

Romans 10:18

The author

# INTRODUCTION

My life has been spent largely in team efforts. Although never one of the elite in athletics, I especially enjoyed team sports, such as basketball. In my pre-Brazil careers in commercial art, journalism and public relations, it was the normal thing to work closely with teams on complex projects.

## A TEAM EFFORT

As our hearts began to turn toward the worldwide mission of the church, it was only normal to think in terms of serving with a team of dedicated workers in some new field, rather than going it alone. This was one reason why we were attracted to the **Operation '68** group movement to Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

As a result, in 1965 we became a part of this Brazil-bound group, devoting the next two years to preparation and joint planning with group leader Cal Hall and with co-workers Charley Huffman and others. Long hours were devoted to planning the future functioning of this team, at a time when we had only sparse information on group evangelism already published to guide us. One of the few group missionary thrusts of our day had reached Sao Paulo, Brazil four years previously and had recorded its initial experiences. We also had access to the guidelines prepared by the Exodus/Bayshore and other Northeastern United States group movements. But apart from these records and a very few other materials, we had little on which to rely, other than trial-and-error.

## TRIALS AND ERRORS ON THE FIELD

In our advance preparation, and even more in our early years on the field, we faced trials and committed almost all of the errors possible, as we attempted to hammer out a

group philosophy of purposes, methods and internal relationships.

We soon discovered, as had other teams before us, that the biggest hurdle we faced, especially in our early years on the field, was in the area of jealousies, doubts and individual weaknesses. These and other irritants kept us meeting almost continually, in an attempt to maintain the gears of our group operation functioning smoothly.

## PERSONALITY CLASHES

Some of our greatest conflicts were due to the presence of incompatible personalities on the team, to the prior lack of mutual acquaintance and friendship among some team members, to stresses caused by difficulty, on the part of some, over language learning and to considerable divergence among some co-workers over methods to employ in our work. There was a pronounced gap in age and experience, as well as in educational and cultural background among individual team members.

Our team, then, was not the team it might have been. As a result, it soon showed stress cracks, which culminated in two families separating themselves from the mission group, one other somewhat isolating itself socially and emotionally from the total program and other families eventually returning home.

## WORKING AND PRAYING TOGETHER

However, several couples remained together and eventually learned to work and pray together, even in the pressure-cooker that is a foreign field. Speaking for myself and my family, we probably would not have entered the field and remained for more than a decade without our close association with colleagues such as the Huffmans, Bennetts, Davises, Browns, Hendersons, Roberts', Caves, Jordans, Sweetons, Ingrams and others over the years.

During these years we have come to know some of the strengths and weaknesses of team evangelism on a foreign field. We have come to understand the advantages of a group thrust in missions. We have also seen several come alone to other major cities in Brazil, remain for two or three years and generally leave unsuccessful and most discouraged. We have seen a small stream of vocational-type workers come and go. Unfortunately, most of these have contributed little to the Lord's cause in our city. Why? Either they have not adapted well, culturally or in the use of the language, or have failed financially. At any rate, two years has been their average length of stay — two years of frustration for them and for the rest of us. I still believe in vocational missions, but see clearly that those coming on a business contract or self-supported basis require the same advance preparation as the fulltime missionary, if their stay is to be beneficial to them and to others.

## THE WAY TO GO

After a decade or more of personal observation, my conclusion must be that team evangelism is for most families the way in which to enter a foreign field — either as part of a new team or by being added “out of season” to an existing on-the-field team. The former has its built-in difficulties, but the trauma may be even greater for the one being incorporated later on, after a team has settled in and developed its own methods and “traditions.”

It became my task recently to write a lengthy chapter on “Group Missionary Effort” for the book, **Guidelines to World Evangelism**, edited by George Gurganus. That was a “first” for me, to put down on paper in some sort of logical sequence the nature of the team missions animal. I still found but few sources from which to draw and so my personal observations perhaps helped furnish some guidelines for others planning to enter the field as a group.

And entering they are, or at least seriously preparing to do



so. A group is working successfully in Buenos Aires and other new teams are serving in Compinas, Brazil; Montevideo, Uruguay, and in other countries. Eight new teams are in preparation for Brazil alone.

## A NEW SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Seeing interest developing at such a relatively rapid rate in foreign team evangelism, Roger Dickson, one of my colleagues in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and himself a team evangelist, decided to write a clear, to-the-point guidebook on group evangelism. As it drew near to its final form, he asked me to read and criticize it, as well as to write this introduction, which I was happy to do.

Roger has discovered the same problem I discovered earlier — a dearth of material available on the subject. But, drawing from the few sources at hand and from hard experience in a group on the field, he has produced a very readable book, one that covers some areas refreshingly new and practical.

His text includes chapters on all of the classic and not-so-classic aspects of group mission work, both from their positive and negative sides. He also discusses both sides of the coin of vocational mission efforts, joining a new team or an “old-pro” team, “Lone Ranger” missionwork, individual preparation for missions, preparation of a team and other very practical topics.

## MOST WELCOME ADDITION

This book will be a most welcome addition to the still almost non-existent library on team missions. I urge all would-be foreign workers and teams to give its material careful consideration before coming to the field. Its observations and suggestions will be helpful to you as you prepare and should contribute very positively to your longevity on the field. I also recommend it as required reading for elders and

missions committees preparing to send teams or individual team members to foreign fields.

Glover Shipp  
Belo Horizonte, Brazil  
January 25, 1978

## THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

Roger Dickson is rapidly becoming known for his many articles in the various gospel papers. Many of these have been mission-centered. Now comes a most welcomed volume from his pen on the subject of Group Missions. But I would predict that there will be many more articles and books to follow, and hopefully so.

The Dicksons, along with several other families, have been engaged in mission work for a number of years in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The beautiful part about this material is the fact that it is written out of an abundance of personal knowledge and experience of what is involved in Group Evangelism.

Bro. Dickson has been invited by the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ to teach in their School of Biblical Studies. This within itself gives us some indication of the respect that brethren have for him as a missionary and a teacher of God's word.

I have personally followed Bro. Dickson's work in the papers and through personal correspondence with him. I also had the privilege of discussing this book with him last November at the Pan American Lectureship in Lima, Peru. I encouraged him to complete the manuscript and to send it to me for publication. And so he has done.

I am having the type set in Singapore, the art work done in New Delhi, India, and then we will have it printed and bound in the United States. As with some of our other publications, this is truly an international book, and rightly so since it deals with the need of world evangelism.

May I commend this work to you. It deals primarily with group efforts, but as Bro. Dickson states more than once, he is for the gospel being preached whether one goes it alone or

with a number of people. I must say that although my family and I have worked primarily alone, we have been greatly impressed with such group efforts of which Bro. Dickson and family have been a part and of which he writes in this volume. I also join him in saying that whether we be one, two, a half dozen, a dozen or more, let us go forth to proclaim the gospel of Christ. For this reason, we are sending forth this book with the prayer and hope that it might prepare and inspire you to do just that.

J.C. Choate  
Winona, Miss.  
Sept. 18, 1978

## Chapter 1

# **GROUP EVANGELISM: A VALID METHOD**

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor” (Eccl. 4:9). The advantage established by a multiplicity of witnesses is an undeniable truth. Many times in the New and Old Testaments we read statements similar to the thought expressed by Jesus in Matthew 18:16, “At the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established” (cf. John 8:17; Heb. 19:28; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19). Such statements stress the importance of group thought and group testimony. There is power in plurality. And there is safety. That, undoubtedly, is one of the reasons behind the example of a plurality of elders in every church (Acts 14:23).

## **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS THE POWER OF TWO**

Yes, two heads are always better than one. We're all fallible. But the chance of two together making a mistake is much less than one man knocking through the School of Life alone. Jesus recognized that. That's one of the reasons why He sent His disciples out two-by-two (Luke 10). And that's why most of the evangelism in the first century was carried out on a group basis.

This chapter is not written with the intention of justifying an existing practice in missions — group evangelism. I am writing in defense of a New Testament practice that is often neglected. Group missions was the common method of evangelism in the first century. It is not a new method dreamed up today by some lonely missionaries. It is older than the New Testament itself.

## THEY WENT TOGETHER

The following are some New Testament examples of the first century Christians evangelizing in groups of two, three or more:

1. Jesus sent out the seventy disciples two-by-two (Luke 10:11).
2. Peter and John were sent together to Samaria to preach (Acts 8:14).
3. Peter and certain other Jews went together to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:23).
4. Paul and Barnabas traveled and evangelized together (Acts 13:1-13).
5. Barnabas and Mark traveled together (Acts 15:39).
6. Paul and Silas traveled together (Acts 15:39).
7. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were together most of the time on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:40ff; 2 Cor. 1:19).
8. Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke traveled together (Acts 16:11).
9. Timothy and Silas preached in Berea (Acts 17:10-15; 18:5).
10. Paul and some of the Berean brethren traveled to Athens (Acts 17:14,15; It was at this time that Paul urged that Timothy and Silas "come to him with all speed").
11. Timothy and Erastus were sent together to Macedonia (Acts 19:22).
12. Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus went to Ephesus (Act 19:29).
13. Paul, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy,

Tychicus and Trophimus were all together at one time (Acts 20:4).

14. Paul and Luke were together as an evangelistic team (Acts 20:6).
15. Paul and Luke were together when Paul was under arrest and headed for Rome (Acts 27:1ff). Luke stayed with Paul, at least to some extent, while Paul was in prison (2 Tim. 4:11).

The overwhelming impression one receives from digging into the New Testament narratives concerning evangelism is that the first missionaries almost always traveled in groups of two, three or more. If any method of missions was taught in the New Testament it would have to be group evangelism. It wasn't that those first sojourners were scared to go it on their own. They just used some good sense about doing mission work. And who is going to say that their methods were wrong?

### MY WIFE AND I

But there are other examples of how they went too. There were husband and wife teams. (Yes, a husband and a wife do make a team – in everything!) Aquila and Priscilla went to Corinth (Acts 18:1,2). This may have been a forced mission effort, being that they had been run out of Rome by the Emperor Claudius. But later they went on to Ephesus with Paul (Acts 18:18, 19). Peter and his wife, and possibly John Mark, went to Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13). These were team efforts. At least these individuals did not go alone to the mission field.

### ALL ALONE

There are, though, those few examples of the early Christians traveling alone. Philip went to Samaria (Acts 8:5). Apollos of Alexandria, a man "mighty in the scriptures," left

his home, went to Ephesus (Acts 18:24), and then on over to Corinth (Acts 19:1). And too, there is the example of Barnabas who went from Jerusalem up to Antioch (Acts 11:22-24).

So there are a few examples of Christians going it on their own. And there is nothing wrong with that. But those examples are few. If one would take the time to study the “we” and “they” sections of the book of Acts, it would be clearly seen that Luke emphasizes the practice of evangelizing in company rather than alone. Of course, my argument is that Luke probably had very few examples – in comparison to the group efforts – to record. They just traveled in groups wherever they went in those days.

I need to clarify here what I mean by team evangelism. Who makes up a mission team? When I use the term group or team in this book I am talking about teams of married couples or single people. I’m not talking about man and wife efforts out there on their own. A team can be composed of many single persons going to the mission field together, or of many married couples, or of both together. It doesn’t make that much difference. The main point here is that they plan **together** and go **together**.

### “I SEE NO NEED”

But why has the church failed to extensively use group evangelism in its mission efforts in past decades? That’s no simple question to answer. But perhaps part of the answer lies in the fact that few have seen the necessity or sense of it. Of course, those who don’t see the necessity have probably never been missionaries.

If team evangelism was considered only on the basis of keeping men on the field by preventing loneliness, it would be worth it. Edward Gibbon once wrote, “I was never less alone than when by myself.” And any missionary who has been stationed between Nowhere and Anywhere knows



that there ought to be a better way. He knows he ought to be there with somebody else. It gets very lonely sitting under a palm tree full of monkeys all by yourself. Monkeys aren't any company at all. Neither is the palm tree.

And then there are those who don't see the sense of group evangelism. But most of these have probably never really studied the subject all that much. No matter what the past reasons have been for not using group evangelism, there seems to be a change toward its use in our present decade. And I think that's just great. More and more missionaries are going into the field in teams. Such needs to be heartily encouraged. This idea about sending one man to one country and calling it evangelized is just a fairy tale dream of those who do not want to send, as they should, regiments of soldiers to the front lines of the world. How can we call a city of over 100,000 evangelized if there is just one missionary there?

### THERE ARE SO FEW

This is the real reason why group evangelism has not been used all that much in the past. There have been, and are, so few missionaries in the church. Few even want to go. Even fewer want to send those who do want to go. Therefore, we feel that we must scatter them among the nations like a handful of seed over one hundred acres of land. We place one man in one country and call it evangelized. That may help soothe our consciences but it will never evangelize the world. Jesus had more in mind in sending out His disciples than the "sprinkler system" evangelism we use today. He wanted every ethnic group of the world infiltrated by soldiers of the cross (Read Matt. 13:31-33).

### MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Then there are the funds necessary for such an effort, that is, the group effort. I don't think it is because there are

no funds available to support large mission efforts. "Lack of money" is not the real reason why we fail to evangelize. The problem goes deeper than that, deeper than just money. I think it is because brethren can not see the need of sowing the seed of the kingdom. When we see the need, we will usually make any sacrifice to sow the seed.

Concentrated group efforts take money, and lots of it. But the benefits are worth it; that is, if there is any comparison between money and souls. It is not a problem of raising funds for any specific group effort. It is a problem of convincing those who are sitting around waiting on heaven that there is a lost world out there, a world that needs the gospel — NOW! Anyone who is convinced of that stark fact doesn't have any problem about digging down deeper, in his heart and in his pocket.

### I DIDN'T KNOW

But let's not place all the blame for the lack of mission work as a whole on the back of supporting brethren. The lack of group evangelism is also a fault of poor planning on the part of those who go. Someone gets a wild-haired idea to go to some far-off land to preach the gospel. So he hits the fundraising trail. If he's persistent enough — and patient, too — he will raise the funds . . . sometimes. But it may never have occurred to him that someone else was or might be planning to go to that same country. Why haven't they gotten their heads together? Who knows? It looks like a little planning, publicizing and cooperation, could help get these two missionaries **together** and headed **together** to the same country. They could help one another get there and stay there longer.

### LET'S GET IT GOING

In 109 A.D., Ignatius of Antioch was partly right when he wrote, "Do not try to persuade yourself that you can do

anything good on your own; on the contrary, do all in common; one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope in the unity of love and in innocent joy — this is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing higher.” Ignatius must have been a missionary. Or at least, he had some good sense about mission methods.

Why can't we get it all together, and then go together? Team evangelism is valid. It's a first century method. It works. If it works — and it does — we need to use it today.

Again, let me emphasize that I am not saying that team evangelism is the only valid method of going into the mission field. It isn't. One can go it on his own. That is an option that can also be considered. And everyone has the choice of that option. But I sincerely believe that team efforts produce a longer stay on the field and more productive work. I believe the figures of the existing mission team efforts in the church today can verify that fact.

## Chapter 2

# **GROUP EVANGELISM: NOW TO WORK TOGETHER**

This chapter deals with the real heart of effective group evangelism. We cannot underestimate the importance of group philosophy. We must never try to cut corners on this key subject in the forming of an evangelistic team effort.

So first, let's define what is meant by group philosophy. Group philosophy is the idea of what a group of missionaries is going to do on the field, how they, as a group, are going to do it, and how they are going to stay together while doing it. And that's a big subject. Let's consider some key aspects of this subject.

I do not mean for this book to be a manual on group missions. So I will not try here to cover the subject of group philosophy in any great detail. There are other books that do that. But I will point out some things you should consider when forming a group.

Actually, group philosophy is the key point in team evangelism. If this subject is not settled before going to the field, the chances of an effective team effort happening is quite slim. So let's take some time here to get our compasses adjusted.

## **DOING IT TOGETHER**

"The iron walls of self," said Norman Cousins, "may be torn down in a magnificent triumph of common purpose and common conscience as men discover they are but single cells in a larger and common body." That sounds good on paper,

but it is hard sometimes to put it into practice.

Every missionary who is a part of a group effort on the field has his own idea of how that group ought to function. We all have a group philosophy, or at least we should. Every group needs to figure out, though, how it is going to work as a group. That's a necessity in working as a team in evangelism. All the individual philosophies of the members must somehow be united to form the philosophy of the whole. That may prove to be a difficult task, but it must and can be done. In a spirit of give and take, it must definitely be accomplished.

### HOW BIG IS BIG?

Here's another thing we need to keep in mind when talking about group philosophy in particular and group evangelism in general. The size of the group and its organizational structure plays a big role here. There are some problems of larger groups which do not effect small groups, and vice versa. When considering the remainder of this book keep this in mind. Most of the material here, though, is centered around the large group structure.

Smaller groups will not have some of the problems that larger groups will have in forming and maintaining their means of operation. The reason for this is simple. There are not as many heads involved in knocking out an agreement. But no matter what the size of the particular group, it must determine how it is going to work together and stay together.

### THE UTOPIA PLAN???

Here's a point we should never forget: There is no one set philosophy of how a group should work together. No group has all the answers. And, there is no such creature as an ideal group philosophy. That's an extinct idea — if it ever

really existed in the first place. So let's never say we have the Utopia Plan in group missions. And any missionary — if he is honest with himself — who has ever worked with a group of missionaries, will be the first to confess that there are some kinks — probably lots — involved in working together as a group. That is only natural and must be accepted as a fact. Just recognizing that problem and patiently working with it can sure save a lot of frustrations.

## BENDABILITY

One of the first things that must be engraved in our heads concerning group philosophy is flexibility. We must be willing to change or bend to meet any or every need or situation. There's no room in group work for cast iron philosophies and concrete minds (all mixed up and set). We must be flexible.

Group philosophy is and must always be in a state of change. As new members come in and old ones go out, there is going to be some changes in thinking. And that's only natural and right. As new needs arise there must be a change in approach. As old needs diminish, present systems of work may have to be relegated to the archives. We must accept this as another fact of group life.

We may even stunt the growth of the national church if we are not willing to change our methods of work. As the national church grows, new needs and opportunities for evangelism arise. If we fail to recognize those needs and opportunities and adapt to them, we may hinder growth. An inflexible group organization is usually a hindrance rather than a help.

So, flexibility is a key to effective group work. We must never do things in "such-and-such a way" because that's the way it has always been done. Bury the past. But, learn from its experience. We must always keep the present and future before us in our planning. Jesus probably had this in

mind in Luke 9:62. Remember, Christianity is a religion of striving for future goals, not struggling over past goofs (cf. Phil. 3:13, 14).

### BUT IT WON'T BEND

Concerning this subject the New Testament does allow for some **inflexibility**. The difference of opinion which developed between Barnabas and Paul is a good example here. It seems that both Paul and Barnabas were inflexible to some extent in their thinking when they began planning for their second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-39). We don't know all the facts here, but the main subject of disagreement seems to have been over whether or not John Mark was going to re-join the group. Barnabas wanted John Mark to come along. But Paul didn't. As a result, Paul and Barnabas parted ways and took separate roads over this matter. They couldn't get their philosophy of group work together so they just organized two other groups and still served the Lord. That is an option when two workers just can't get it all together.

But in this context, it must be re-emphasized that Christians should do all possible to develop a spirit of cooperation. That's Christianity. Paul himself stated, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, **that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel**" (Phil. 1:27; cf. 1 Cor. 1:10). That should explain the cooperative atmosphere of every group.

Nothing destroys the forming of real, functioning groups more than the lack of the ability to cooperate. If one is going to do mission work on a group basis he **must** learn to cooperate. He must be able to sacrifice his will for the cause of the whole. At all times we must nurture a cooperative spirit, not a competitive spirit (cf. Phil. 2:1-4). Team members must decide to work together to accomplish the single goal of all missionaries involved. That goal, of course, is to

sow the Seed and prepare souls for that Great Day.

But if two absolutely cannot get together on how they are going to reach that goal, then they should go their separate ways. The main thing is that if we go our separate ways, we must keep on doing the will of the Lord, just like Paul and Barnabas did. I've always wondered if that is why the Holy Spirit had Luke record in the New Testament that specific disagreement on mission work. It is a good example of not forsaking the Lord's work, even though we may disagree with our brethren on how to carry out the Great Commission.

## FORMING MEMBERS INTO GROUPS

Montaigne said, "A man should think less of what he eats and more with whom he eats, because no food is so satisfying as good company." And that's right. In forming a group for team evangelism special care should be taken in the choosing of team members. There should be some agreement on at least the basics of what is to be accomplished through the group effort.

The combined thinking of team members make up group philosophy. If one probable member cannot harmonize his thinking with the other members before going, then he should consider going his own way. I don't think there is anything necessarily wrong with that, as long as he goes somewhere to evangelize. That's what Paul and Barnabas did before they set out on their second journey. But one thing they did do was to solve the problem **before** they went to the field. Now that is a good example for us today.

In forming a group, careful consideration, therefore, should be made of the thinking of each individual member. Here are just a few things to ask one another or consider in the process of grouping individuals together as a team of missionaries:

1. What is the personality of each member? Does each



member have a cooperative spirit to work together as a team?

2. What are the specialized talents of each member?
3. What are the specific desires of each member? How and in what capacity does each member want to work on the team?
4. What does each member want to accomplish on the field?
5. What are the academic qualifications of each member?
6. How long does each member want to stay on the field?
7. When does each member want to go to the field?
8. To what field or people or culture does each member want to go?

These are just a few of the questions that must be asked and answered in forming a group philosophy. Most deal with the desires and abilities of each member. But these must be worked out to determine if all members can work harmoniously together in tackling the other tasks of group philosophy. There will be many other things that will also have to be worked out. Just don't try to skip by with little planning and discussion of this point.

Groups should consider the question: "How can we work together?" as well as the question: "How should we work together?" Actually, group evangelism is the bringing together by love, understanding and cooperation, the many desires and abilities of individual Christians to accomplish a single goal — evangelization. That's what it is all about. And the Bible says it can be done; that is, we can get together and work together to see that that task is done.

So in the initial stages of forming group philosophy, take into careful consideration the thinking of each individual member. Every member should know every other member.

The members should know one another's mental attitude and physical health. Can so-and-so carry his own load? Consider the Bible knowledge of each member and his willingness to study the Bible. What good is a missionary who is ignorant of the Bible and has no desire to study the Word of Life? The group as a whole must know the spiritual strength, the perseverance, the patience, the mission technical knowledge and cooperativeness of every member. All these elements go into forming a good group, one that can function in unity.

### WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?

As defined before, group philosophy is defining what you want as well as how you want to do it. Figuring out what we want is easy. We all want strong, indigenous churches. We want more Christians. Now how we are going to do that as a group is another question. It is a difficult question that demands a lot of thinking and planning.

First of all, before the battle really begins here among group members, a team must determine to stay together and work together through thick and thin. We should almost have an "until death do us part" attitude. This is the key. Without this determination things will surely come unglued. Each member must be dedicated to the cause of Christ. But also, each member must have some dedication to the cause of effective group evangelism.

As a group, we must determine to stick it out, even though the majority might go against what we personally want to do as an individual member. It's a give and take situation. If all you want to do is take, then you might be better off taking your marbles and going somewhere else. Such an attitude doesn't work in a group effort — it doesn't really work in Christianity either, as far as that goes. Now that I've preached that short sermon, let's consider some other specific things.

The method bag is full to the brim with different methods

of work which can be used on the field. The only problem is choosing which one, or ones, to use, and also, how to use it. Most will agree that the best thing to use to kill a charging bear is a 30-06 high-powered rifle. But again, not everyone knows how to use such a weapon. Some would put the butt of the gun to their shoulder and pull the trigger. But some may be foolish enough to put the muzzle to their shoulder and pull the trigger. One way is effective in killing bears; the other is only effective in ruining good shoulders. So in group evangelism, we must determine what we are going to do, how it can be done effectively, and who is best prepared to do it.

What are the individual talents of each member? That is a primary question to be answered first. By knowing this it can better be determined what to do . . . usually. There will always be questions and arguments over what to do and who should do it. The following are just a few questions a group needs to first consider and answer in determining the group's philosophy, how it is going to work together:

1. How long has or will the group as a whole commit itself to the specific field or labor?
2. Are we going to establish one large and strong congregation first, or many small house churches? Will we establish house churches in the life of the work? Or, will we have large church owned buildings?
3. Are we going to use U.S. money on the field? Will U.S. funds be used to support national preachers, church buildings, local programs, etc.?
4. What will be the first major evangelistic thrust?
5. Shall we confine our evangelistic thrust to the urban areas or shall we concentrate on the rural areas?
6. On what classes of people shall we concentrate our evangelistic thrust?

7. Will we immediately begin a Bible correspondence Course work?
8. What about leadership and preacher training? How are we going to do it? When will we begin doing it?
9. And then, publications. How? What? When?
10. What about radio work? Shall we? Who will pay for it?
11. Bible camps? Can we? Should we? Where will we get the funds?
12. Who will do the preaching for the first local congregation? Who will teach the Sunday Bible classes? Will all the missionaries worship at first at one congregation?

And on and on we could go. Forming a group philosophy is not easy. It is probably the hardest task of all in forming an effective group effort. But hammering out a clear, practical philosophy of work is something that **absolutely must be done**. If it isn't, things are going to come unraveled like a snagged winter sweater.

There are probably a hundred other things that could be said on this subject. Others undoubtedly have said it better in more complete books. I write these few things here to stress the importance of group philosophy in team evangelism. The following chapters will deal with some advantages and possible problems that could develop in a team effort. The subject of group philosophy enters into almost all of these advantages and possible problems. Therefore, we should give much time and careful consideration to the forming of a good and clear group philosophy.

## Chapter 3

# ADVANTAGES OF GROUP EVANGELISM

In this chapter we need to focus in on the advantages of group evangelism. To me, this is one of the most exciting subjects of mission work. Why it is exciting is that a thoroughly planned and organized group effort can be one of the most dynamic movements on the mission field. If you are considering going to the mission field, it is my prayer that you will seriously consider what is stated in this chapter.

Team evangelism is a valid method of taking the gospel to the world. Of course, to keep things balanced, I will open Pandora's Box in the following chapter by discussing some possible problems that might develop in group efforts if we are not conscious of them. But here the subject is advantages, so I will keep the discussion optimistic. We need to see why these advantages offer strong support for the group idea.

We must clarify something here before we start on these advantages. Group evangelism is a valid method of mission work but it is not the only method of going into the harvest field. There are some definite advantages to this type of structure in evangelizing the world. But there are also some weak points for which we need to be on the lookout. Group evangelism does not offer all the answers. To be a missionary, one does not have to go into a foreign field with a group. There are also some advantages in going alone. But in this chapter, let's talk about the strong points of going as a team. The following points are some reasons why I think teams work. These are reasons why we should seriously consider group evangelism as a major method of thrust in evangelizing the world.

## A. THE TWO-HEADED ADVANTAGE

As stated before, two heads are always better than one, at least most of the time. There is greater protection against making errors with two or more heads (Prov. 11:14; 15:22). Someone said, "The best way to prove that you have good judgment is by not relying upon it alone." Snap judgments of impulsive people are easily unfastened. But the careful planning of a multitude is more likely to produce long lasting plans.

Solomon wrote, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccl. 4:9-12). Now there's some good inspired advice. Two persons together as a team can make and carry out better decisions. That is a general rule.

The two heads or more, though, need to be cooperative. It is not the idea of the lamb and the lion lying down together and only the lion getting up afterwards. Unity needs to prevail. And in an atmosphere of common goals, dreams can be made. They can also be realized. Teams that cooperatively dream together are dynamite. They go places and get things done. Their decisions are more sound; their thinking has a better chance of getting off the ground.

## B. THE MANPOWER ADVANTAGE

"Cooperation is everything," someone correctly stated, "Freckles would make a nice coat of tan if they'd get together." Team members working together definitely have a manpower advantage. They can teach more Bible classes in a given locality, do more visiting, more preaching and more praying. Their impact upon any given community is like a

beaming lighthouse on a stormy night. A thoroughly organized team can save mountains of time and talent.

The disadvantage of working alone is that the missionary has to do everything himself. And the missionary who has to always pull his own weight on the mission field usually wears out faster. An individual can accomplish more on the mission field if he is working with a group effort instead of working by himself. Sure, the "loner" can pay someone to do a lot of his work. But one man working with you is worth more than ten men who are working for you.

### C. THE GROWTH ADVANTAGE

Of course, more rapid growth is an obvious advantage to group evangelism. The church springs to life in a given area because of concentrated efforts. Growth excites enthusiasm. And enthusiasm stimulates more enthusiasm, just like measles — one child in the family gets it and it quickly spreads to the rest.

When there are many workers in one area, the local church can grow faster. And that's what we want. I just recently visited a denominational church which grew from 200 members to over 800 in a three year period as the result of an intensive group effort. That's growth! After that particular church was sufficiently strong, the evangelism team moved on to another area, to do the same type of intensive evangelism. In such an effort there is not that period of ten to fifteen years of hard labor in one location by a lone missionary just to get an initial spark of growth.

But let me caution all group thinkers here. There are some areas where a group effort might not necessarily be expedient. Working with a small Indian tribe in the middle of the Amazon Basin might be an example. The slow, patient work of a single missionary over a period of years might be the best thing in such a situation. Certainly, a group of ten white Americans moving into a tribe of about 300 Indians would

not be all that wise. So a little wisdom needs to be exercised here. As I said before, group evangelism does not settle all the problems. But in areas where it is applicable, immediate and continued growth can be realized. (For some idea of the growth of the church in the first century, read: Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31,35,42; 11:21,24; 14:1,21; 16:5; 17:12).

#### D. THE FINANCIAL ADVANTAGE

Mission work will always involve money. It takes money to survive, and money to do a good job of surviving. In missions it takes money to function, and to function well. What good is a poverty-stricken missionary? It has always been my belief that missionaries should be equipped with whatever it takes to allow them to do the most effective job they can. This should include sufficient teaching supplies, good transportation and anything else that will allow our missionaries to do all they can on the field.

Obviously, when there is a group of missionaries working in a given locality, they can pool their resources to accomplish various tasks. (We'll talk about possible disadvantages of this in a later chapter.) The combination of several sources of funds can help get off the ground many works which can be handled only by the financial strength of many missionaries working together.

Elders will always have more trust in the decisions of a group of men than in a lone worker. That's only natural. There is wisdom in the decisions of a multitude of people concerning the handling of money. That is not to say, though, that a wise lone worker cannot make wise decisions. Making decisions that are good is just a part of being a good missionary. And any missionary that cannot be trusted to make sound decisions should really not be a missionary in the first place. But for a group, raising funds seems to be much easier than it is for a lone missionary. Churches have a greater inclination to trust the decision of a group of men,



especially when large sums of money are involved.

Also, in team evangelism there is usually more contact with more churches in the States. More Stateside churches know about the work of the group. This is advantageous for raising funds for special projects, as well as raising support for individual group members.

## E. THE SPECIALIZING ADVANTAGE

Everyone has his thing, or things he can do best, his talent or talents (cf. Rom. 12:9ff; Matt. 25:14-30). For example, 1 Corinthians 12:14-31 seems to be a Biblical imperative to capitalize on the talents of each Christian. We must do what we can with what we have. And team evangelism allows individual members to use their specific talents on the mission field. After all, isn't that what team evangelism is all about? When a team is thoroughly organized, usually, no key talents will be lost. But the problem — we'll talk about this in the next chapter — comes when there is an overlap in talent.

The church is a cauldron of talents and abilities. And in the mission work of the church every talent must be put to work. Group evangelism allows these individual talents to be used to their maximum in taking the gospel to the world.

In group work, all talents are needed. Every man must do what he can do best. No member can exclude himself from the work of the others. No one can bury his talent. Good group work will not function if members determine to work in isolation or hide their talents under a bushel. It was a wise author who said, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; and therefore never seem to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Taking the gospel to the world in a group effort is something like that. Everyone has a vital task to perform and everyone must perform his part of the whole task.

## F. THE ON-THE-BALL ADVANTAGE

Here is where team evangelism has a definite advantage over working alone as a missionary. In team work, missionaries can keep one another "on-the-ball." Members can keep one another from burying their talents. They can keep one another from just getting lazy.

Group members can keep one another working by just giving an encouraging word or two every once in a while. On the mission field those words are few and far between for the man working alone. But in team work they can come often. And saying "amen" to a man's work is like saying "fetch" to a ready and obedient dog. We all need encouragement, even missionaries. (Read Heb. 3:13; 10:24.)

## G. THE READY SHOULDER ADVANTAGE

"Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). Every missionary knows the preciousness of those words. But the problem comes when there is no one with whom to weep in times of despair. This is a problem that has driven many a missionary to home ports.

Too often we have hastily packed up and packed off a missionary to some far off land and foreign culture. After the first few months, the newly arrived missionary begins to realize what culture shock is all about. Those book-learned concepts about culture shock really come to life. In those first few months he has had insufficient time to establish any real heart-felt friends. All he has is himself and his faith. Sometimes even his faith isn't much of a help. If he has his wife, he can cry on her shoulder. (May God laden the crown of every missionary wife with golden stars.) Usually, the missionary husband and wife just have one another's shoulders to cry upon. Sometimes, that is just not enough.

It was once said, and rightly so, "A person isn't lonesome

because he is alone, but because he is not with some other person." Group evangelism can cure most of the problems here. Every member is with someone else. And there is comfort in that. Paul was comforted by his companions (2 Cor. 7:5,6). In groups, missionaries can encourage one another to stay on the field in times of discouragement. They can help that discouraged team member burn his return plane ticket for home.

In times of despair, brethren are great. It was said, "The brotherhood of man is a wonderful idea, especially when you are in need of help." In Christ, we are more than just good friends or brothers in the flesh. We are brothers in the faith. And that is a great and comforting thought. (Read 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 7:6,7.)

## H. THE TESTIMONY ADVANTAGE

In relation to church discipline, Jesus said "that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16). There is the sound of authority in the testimony of two or more people. And when entering a society that has never before seen or experienced Christianity, the voice of more than one man is received more readily than the voice of just one man.

Could the above be part of the reason why Peter took other Jews with him when he went to visit the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:23, 44, 55)? The other Jews were not only a testimony of Christianity to the house of Cornelius, but they were also a testimony to the Christian Jews back in Jerusalem. When Peter and his company returned to Jerusalem, they were called into question about what had been done at the house of the Gentile, Cornelius. Yes, there is power in the testimony of a team of Christians on the mission field, simply because of the testimony of a group of people.

## I. THE CONSTANT EFFORT ADVANTAGE

Missionaries should always take furloughs. But when a missionary is gone for three or four months his work on the field usually suffers. In group work, the other missionaries can usually take up the slack when a group member is out of town or out of the country. Or, if a member is ill, there is someone else who can help out in his area of work. The work goes on and does not come to a screeching halt when the missionary is absent. This is a definite advantage to working as a group on the mission field.

## J. THE IMMEDIATE FELLOWSHIP ADVANTAGE

Another advantage to having a group of Christians on the field is that such offers immediate fellowship for new converts. So many times in the first year or two of the work of a lone missionary, the newly converted national is left with the fellowship of a few, sometimes only two or three or four Christians. But in group efforts the first converts come into a dynamic and enthusiastic fold which gives the impression of being a solid, continuing, evangelistic effort. And it is.

And then also, just the presence of Americans is often a drawing signal in itself. Some nationals are drawn to associate with Americans. Because of the foreign element and the opportunity to speak English they want to associate with the Americans. This association can many times lead to the conversion of alien sinners. So good fellowship can have its advantages. (Read Rom. 15:1,2; Gal. 6:1,2; Heb. 3:13; 10:24.)

## K. THE NO CHIEF ADVANTAGE

One of the problems with a single missionary working in some parts of the world is that he may become the "big white chief." And any real missionary would not want

that to happen. Many people of foreign cultures, though, still have a great respect for Americans. And there's nothing wrong with that. Such respect, though, can lead to an unhealthy exaltation of the lone missionary. But in group evangelism there is less chance that one missionary will become the "great white god." (Read 1 Cor. 1:10-13.)

## L. THE LEARNING ADVANTAGE

The learning environment provided by group mission efforts is unlimited, especially if the group is large. We'll discuss this more in a following chapter. But here I would like to note some things that the group atmosphere provides as far as a learning situation goes.

One learns to cooperate. In a group effort one has to learn to cooperate. He has to! If problems arise, Matthew 5:23, 24 and Matthew 18:15-17 have to be incorporated. Actually, the principle of these two verses is the key to keeping things running smoothly and cooperatively in a group effort.

One also learns from the experience of his fellow workers. It is said, "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgments." Weekly or monthly talk sessions about the work and culture can save much time and many mistakes on the part of each individual member. What one learns he can pass on to the rest. And when one member is running into all sorts of kinks with his particular area of work, his fellow workers can come to his aid with advice and suggestions. As Breecher said, "A helping word to one in trouble is often like a switch on a railroad track — but one inch between a wreck and smooth rolling prosperity."

There are countless things that can be learned from group discussions. There is no comparison between this learning environment and that of a lone worker. One missionary has only himself, whereas the group has a flock of fellow-workers

and fellow-counselors. One of the most dynamic aspects of an effective group effort is a healthy and constructive regular meeting of the minds. Such mental encounters can produce untold ideas for sowing the seed of the Kingdom. Every group should strive to thoroughly develop a concise manner of group discussion. Such an atmosphere for discussion will certainly produce much fruit. (Read Psa. 55:14; Prov. 12:15; 13:10; 19:20; 27:9.)

### M. THE STABILITY ADVANTAGE

As a last point here, I would like to re-emphasize as a major point something that has been briefly stated in the previous points. This concerns stability. To the national, a group effort would certainly have the advantage of appearing more stable. Team efforts do not give the impression of a "fly-by-night" operation. The effort itself literally says, "We're here to stay." And that usually appeals to nationals. They want and need something permanent, something that is not "here today and gone tomorrow."

There are other points that could possibly be added to this list of advantages for group evangelism. Certainly, these are strong points in favor of this type of mission outreach. I believe that these advantages are forceful enough to counterbalance most disadvantages. Every missionary should consider these advantages of a group work situation before he makes his decision to go to the mission field. He or she may decide that this is the way to enter the field.

## Chapter 4

# GROUP EVANGELISM: DANGER AREAS

Don't read this chapter and get the idea that I'm against group evangelism. It is obvious from the preceding chapters that I am not. Group evangelism does offer advantages which qualify it as being one of the best methods of evangelism. But, like almost any other method in missions, there are some possible problem areas. At least, there are some areas that can develop into problems if they are not checked by good planning and organization. And that is a key to this subject, good planning and organization.

Going as a team to the far off fields is a good way to go. But in going as a team there are some definite factors to be on the lookout for. Team evangelism is not necessarily a perfect model. In fact, no model may be perfect. This chapter is about some of the disadvantages, weaknesses, drawbacks — call it what you want — of group evangelism. I use these terms with reservation for many times one is encouraged to use what will be listed in this chapter as **excuses** for not going as a team. That's unfortunate. I state these points not as an argument against team evangelism but to thoroughly acquaint the reader with the areas of possible problems. Let's keep this in mind. A thorough knowledge of problem areas will help a team to better prepare and organize. So these are just things every one who is considering group work must be aware of.

Of course, what I will be talking about in this chapter will vary greatly between large groups (say six or more families) and small groups (five families or less). There is a difference in how the two usually function, at least some of the time. What is stated here will also vary with the specific culture

into which a group may go. There are different problems faced by the group that goes to a large metropolitan area of the world and the group that goes to a rural environment. Where the group is makes a lot of difference. The main thing is to be on the lookout for the following possible problems in whatever situation you may be in.

### A. THE AGREEMENT PROBLEM

As long as two people exist upon the face of this good old earth, disagreement is going to hang around. And in mission work too, disagreement is always there. If you have ever been a missionary you know what I'm talking about. Every missionary has his own idea of how it ought to be done. Get two missionaries together, and sure enough, you have two ways in which one thing ought to be done. The only problem comes in trying to decide who's going to give in. Disagreement was what broke up one of the first group mission efforts (Acts 15:36). But that disagreement wasn't all bad, because two separate groups formed from that original split (Acts 15:39).

Difference of opinion is probably one of the greatest problems to be faced in evangelism by groups. There will always be a conflict between what each member wants to do. And it starts from the very beginning of the group's foundation. Where shall we go as a team? If there are ten families in the group, there will probably be ten or more (don't forget the wives) answers to that question.

And then when you get to the field, there will be a score or more of things to argue about there. What works are we going to do? Who and where? That first year can be murder. Let's face it, disagreements always exist in human relationships. We just need to work them all out in love.

For some odd reason it seems that it is always hard for preachers to agree upon how to do almost anything. String them together in any way on a mission field, and bang,



there is bound to be an explosion. They're an independent bunch and find it hard sometimes to meet halfway on methods. Not because they're obstinate by nature but just because they are leaders. And leaders are usually forward in action and mind.

But we're all hard-headed to some extent. We all want to have our way, at least at times. Right or wrong, that's only natural. And there will always be those who want to have **everything** their way **all the time**. But in group work, there is no room for that. If one cannot ride the same horse with the others, it is best if he just gets off.

No disagreement, though, can long exist where love and understanding exist. And every group needs lots of that. All of those small disagreements can be soaked in the honey of love, sweetened up and made palatable. On major disagreements, there is the drastic recourse of just going our own ways. But let's not permit every disagreement to arrive at that point. Mole hills aren't mountains except to a mole. Disagreements do not have to be divisive. We must have an agreeable spirit. It's an absolute necessary ingredient for group work. Cooperation, not contention, is the attitude we must cultivate. (Read Amos 3:3; Prov. 13:10; 15:18; 26:21; Rom. 14:20; 1 Cor. 13:4-7.)

## B. THE PERSONALITY PROBLEM

Just because sister Euodia and sister Syntyche can't get along together doesn't mean that their names have been scratched out of the Book of Life (Phil. 4:2-4). They haven't. Let's remember that. There will always be differences in individual personalities. That's the way we are — different and individual. I'm glad I'm not a robot. And I'm glad God did not make us all the same. But sometimes differences in personality can interfere with group work. Sometimes those personalities that differ just cannot get together. This can be a potential danger if we do not know how to deal with personality conflicts.

Someone said, "You can't spell **brothers** and not spell **others**." And William Allen White reminds us, "Since others have to tolerate my weaknesses, it is only fair that I tolerate theirs." Let's remember here that love "vaunteth not itself" and "seeketh not its own" (1 Cor. 13:4,5). That's the foundation for harmony. And there must be harmony in group work. Paul exhorted in Romans 12:10 that we maintain an attitude of love. "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another." I can't think of any better advice for group harmony than that.

Most personality conflicts in a group effort could be overcome if members would just approach one another with love and frankness. That was what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 5:23, 24. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, **first be reconciled to thy brother**, and then come and offer thy gift." As long as that principle is practiced in a team, most of the personality problems can be solved.

But in the first stages of organizing a group, the members should spend as much time together as possible before they go to the field. Members should know one another well. If there is a personality conflict, it may be better that the two personalities which create mutual friction part ways before going to the field. I don't think that is necessarily wrong. Only let them part in love. If we can't make it together, let us make it alone. But above all, let's be sure to make it. We must. That's our whole purpose for being Christians (Read Phil. 2:2-4; Rom. 12:16; Eph. 4:16.)

### C. THE TOO CLOSE PROBLEM

This is another difficulty that could possibly develop in a group if left unchecked. Almost all missionaries who have worked in a team effort confess that families can live too close together, socially. Now this may seem strange at

first. But sometimes, if we become too well acquainted we may try to rear the other family's children, or tell a fellow missionary wife how she should clean her house, or cook her food, or just run her life. That's living in each other's pockets. The purpose of a group is to be close, but not that close.

Working as a group in evangelism doesn't mean we have to live as if in a commune. When families live too close together, there are going to be some bad vibrations somewhere. And in an effort to get close together, we may actually grow further apart, or split completely. No few problems have been created in specific group efforts because two or three of the families became so close that they tried to run one another's lives. We can actually run one another off by doing such.

This problem can be solved first by being conscious of it, and secondly, by living apart from one another geographically. Just living across town from one another is a beginning. Group members must stay out of one another's hair.

But let's not carry this to an extreme. After all, isn't fellowship one of the main purposes for the existence of the group in the first place? One can have fellowship, though, without trying to rear someone else's children. We don't need to either. I have a hard enough time trying to rear my own four children without trying to rear someone else's. We just should not try to run another's family life. Peter correctly warned, "For let none of you suffer as . . . a meddler in other men's matters" (1 Pet. 4:15). Some clearly thought-out social rules by the group would help guard against the problems that will develop if families try to live too close. We need to learn how to keep out of one another's personal lives and yet be truly sociable and friendly. (Read 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:13; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Time. 5:13; Heb. 12:14.)

## D. THE ENTHUSIASM PROBLEM

"Fires cannot be made with dead embers," emphasized Baldwin, "nor can enthusiasm be stirred by spiritless men." That's true. But can enthusiasm itself become a problem? Yes, it can.

Missionaries are the most spirited men in the church. They're on fire for the Lord and are the fire of world evangelism. Get a group of them together and you will sometimes have a bonfire. But bonfires can get out of control. We need fire, but not wild fire. The group that is carried away by enthusiasm will have a long way to walk back.

McTee was right when he said, "The world belongs to the enthusiast who keeps his cool." Cool-headed groups do not become overly enthusiastic and set sky-high goals that are unrealistic. Remember, we're building "sky seekers", not sky-scrappers. Those that don't realize this will find themselves in a very frustrating situation as they try to reach sky-high goals which were established when their heads were carried to the clouds by over-enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm in group evangelism is good. But over-enthusiasm can sometimes do harm. Let's be enthusiastic without being ecstatic. Keep your cool and think things through, carefully and prayerfully. Most of the time when we jump into the water like Peter to get to the shore before anyone else, we jump into hot water. We need to carry an enthusiastic attitude, but not be carried away by over-enthusiasm. (Read Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19; 1 Sam. 18:14; Psa. 101:2.)

## E. THE LAZY PROBLEM

This is an almost opposite problem to the preceding one. Being out there on the field and away from overseeing elders can sometimes bring to light some lazy bones if we're not careful. In a large group there can be the tendency for one

member to ride along on the work of the others. Instead of pulling his own load, he is a load being pulled. He becomes lost in the activities of others.

Group members should not be victims of laziness and the group as a whole should be on the lookout for victims of laziness. A good, kind, encouraging word should solve the problem here. If it doesn't, then Mr. Lazy should be encouraged to ship out. The vineyard of the Lord is no place for laziness. (Read 2 Cor. 9:1,2; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 3:19.)

## F. THE OVERBURDENED PROBLEM

When Paul said to "bear one another's burdens" he wasn't necessarily talking about doing everybody's job. In large group work there can be the tendency to cast all our burdens of work upon the poor fellow who has a special talent and zeal to do that work. A photographer in the group may be asked to do all of the group's photography work. He may be asked to do such to the extent that he becomes a photographer and not a missionary, a teacher of the Word. Or a mechanic may be fixing so many missionary cars that he has no time to fix souls. And if all we have on the field are photographers and mechanics, who's going to do the preaching and the teaching of Bible classes. Of course, "non-evangelistic" talents as these are good to have around, but we need to be conscious about what we are supposed to be doing on the mission field. We're there to evangelize.

## G. THE CLIQUE PROBLEM

The possibility of this problem is usually greater with larger groups. But we must remember, too, that it only takes two to form a clique. Small, intimate sub-fellowships may form within the larger group. The older members may associate only among themselves, and the younger members, likewise. Two or three personalities may be drawn together

to the extent that they exclude the rest of the group from their small inner circle. The same unfortunate problem happens in churches, too. Be on the lookout for cliques. Don't let them develop in a group effort. The attitude of all being together and striving together for a common goal should be cultivated. Having regular group fellowships of all members will help prevent this problem.

## H. THE GOSSIP PROBLEM

Yes, missionaries can get "hoof-and-mouth disease" too, that is, hoofing it over to the neighbors and mouthing it off.

Sometimes, believe it or not, missionaries in a group can become so secluded in their particular works that they have little contact with one another socially. When one or two do get together, the words roll. That's communication in action. And it's great for morale, if you are a secluded missionary thoroughly enveloped in your work. You might say that such communication is necessary.

But the problem comes when healthy communication digresses into contaminating gossip about fellow workers. Groups should guard against gossip from all sides. One man should never gossip about how the other man is working. If there is a disagreement, then go to that person individually. Neither should missionaries gossip with the nationals about a fellow missionary. Gossip is sin. Paul said that some go "about from house to house . . . speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13). Nothing will tear up the harmony of a group faster than gossip. It will thoroughly destroy the group itself if left unchecked. (Read Prov. 26:28; 18:8; 26:20; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Pet. 4:15)

## I. THE IDENTITY PROBLEM

When a group of American families moves into a foreign culture there may be the tendency to retain their American

culture. Culture has a bad habit of just tagging along wherever we go. This is usually called **cultural overhang**, and hang over it does. When there is close fellowship between group members on the field, there is sometimes the tendency not to fully identify with the national culture. This can become a serious problem if team members are not aware of it.

And too, if there is strong fellowship among group members, they may be slow in identifying with or fellowshiping with the national Christians. On the other hand, national Christians may have a difficult time identifying with missionaries and fitting into their program of work. And really, they aren't the ones who should be "fitting in." It's the missionaries who should. Identification takes a lot of rooting out of homeland cultural traits and a lot of replanting of the cues of the new culture. In groups there's always the tendency to keep our old ways by fellowshiping mostly with those of a similar cultural background. This is one reason why some workers do not speedily and effectively "culture-in" in the foreign setting. So be on the guard for this unique problem of group evangelism. It doesn't have to happen if one makes a sincere effort to identify with the foreign culture.

## J. THE LONE RANGER PROBLEM

Some missionaries have an independent attitude. They can go it on their own and survive. Others cannot survive culture shock, loneliness and homesickness on the mission field, if they are not with a group. Thank God for those who are the "lone ranger" type. And thank God for those who have to be with groups. Just let Christ be preached. We need more missionaries and anyway we can scripturally get good missionaries to the field and keep them there should be practiced.

The problem is that it may be unwise to put a "grouper" out there on his own. And, it may be just as unwise to put a "loner" out there in a group. Some men are cut out to

do it on their own. That's all right. But one should somehow figure that out before joining a group. Or, after a year or so of experience with a group, the "loner" may want to start another work in another area. That's all right too. But "loners" never really work out well in group situations and "groupers" never really work well out there somewhere by themselves. God needs both types. And both can do a great work in His kingdom. But if a man feels that he cannot work in a group situation, then he should work on his own. I say all of this, though, with the opinion that more missionaries could work better and much more efficiently in a group situation than on their own.

## K. THE TIMIDITY PROBLEM

Here is another problem that is linked with the social aspect of a group, specifically the group discussion. In large groups, the opinions of more timid members may be overshadowed. The more outgoing and persuasive members may take the reins too often without a fair evaluation of the opinions of all members. This could be frustrating to those members who are not so quick to voice their opinions.

But timid members should be more confident with their opinions. Every member should have his say in a group discussion. Everybody's thinking should be taken into consideration and should be respected. More boisterous members should ease off a little to produce a balanced atmosphere of discussion in group meetings. Timid members should get rid of the "timids" and come on a little stronger in their contributions to the communication process.

Again, a well organized group discussion process would cure most of the problems here. It must be remembered that everyone should be able to have his say and that "say" should be respected by all. Without that mutual respect for one another the group discussion will usually be lopsided. (Read Prov. 3:26; Isa. 30:15; Eph. 3:11,12.)



## L. THE WEAK-KNEE PROBLEM

Sometimes within a large group the tendency may develop to depend too much upon fellow group members and not enough upon God. Being together as a group for mutual strength and encouragement is one reason for the very existence of the group. And the Bible certainly teaches that we should comfort one another by our presence and word (Col. 4:7, 8, 10, 11; 1 Thess. 3:2; 4:18). But we must always remember that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). Don't let the group become a substitute for the real source of strength. (Read Psa. 4:4; 62:7, 8; Job 39:11; Isa. 26:4; Jer. 17:7; Acts 20:32; 1 Thess. 2:13.)

## M. THE BIG MACHINE PROBLEM

One of the advantages of group evangelism is that big works, such as Bible camps, schools and campaign programs, can be carried out effectively. But many times we develop a big operation — of course, it's a "good work" — which the national Christians are completely unable to manage or take-over because of the lack of experience and/or funds. Such is really against the idea of indigenous principles, if that's what we are working for.

Isn't it our purpose to establish indigenous churches? If we crank up a big machine that only Americans and American funds can maintain, it can easily gobble up the national church. Large groups should be careful here not to produce something they'll be unable to transfer later to the local Christians. Or, they should consider getting out from under those works which the local church cannot handle, before they leave the field. It's not wrong to just sell a print shop or Bible camp or whatever if such is going to place an unbearable financial burden on the back of the local church when the missionaries are gone. I say this not to frighten us away from large scale works on the field. We should just be careful not to throw a big bear into the

arms of an infant. If the local church cannot take over the work, don't make the mistake of dropping it into their hands and heading for home.

## N. THE "I AM NOT" PROBLEM

Another possible problem that could develop in large groups is collectivism. What I mean by this is that the individual is overshadowed by the multitude; one becomes just another number; individualism is crowded out by collectivism. I believe that is an unhealthy atmosphere in which to function.

This goes back to everyone's finding his own little niche in the group effort. Everyone should feel needed. And every member should feel and realize a need for every other member. We can work as a group on certain projects. We can make some decisions as a group. But every member needs to have his special "thing." And every member needs to be able to exercise individual decision power over his thing, his work. Too much group control over all aspects of our work can become unhealthy to the individual initiative of each group member.

One way to avoid this is not to let the group as a whole exercise tight decision control over all aspects of the group work. Loosen up and let every member breathe a little. Of course, I am talking about groups who work very close together as far as decision-making goes. But too much decision power by the group as a whole over individual works can lead to frustration on the part of some individual members who are trying to do their specific work. Just let go of the reins a little as a group and give a man credit for being able to steer his own cart. There are things in a group that demand the decision of the group as a whole. But there are also areas where individual members should be able to exercise individual right to decision. We need to recognize that fact in our group organization.

The hard part comes when we try to draw that line between individual right to decision and group right to decision. That's a hard line to draw. But two factors need to be kept in mind when trying to draw it: (1) usually a well thought-out group decision is better and (2) the group deciding process should not stalemate individual initiative. One reason for going as a group is to make better and more thought-out decisions. That must first be kept in mind when grappling with this possible problem. But each group will have to make its own decision as to where to draw the line here between group control and individual control.

## O. THE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE PROBLEM

Sometimes in Congress a committee is appointed to fulfill a specific need. But when the need is taken care of, many times the committee just goes on so that someone won't be out of a job. That can happen in group evangelism too.

This is usually a problem only with large and highly organized groups. Committees are established to plan and carry out certain works, such as publications, Bible correspondence programs, leadership training, legal matters, etc. But sometimes, when the need has been taken care of, the committee lingers on, and on, and on. And it sometimes lingers on in our reports back home, too. If a committee has and does a specific work, then keep it in the organization. But if a committee has no need, then scratch it from the list. Dead committees usually have a way of fading into oblivion, anyway.

## P. THE SLOW DECISION PROBLEM

For groups to work harmoniously, members must make major decisions together. Groups need to work out a method for making decisions promptly, without letting one "slow decider" throw a monkey wrench into the machinery of

progress. An indecisive member can certainly slow things down if the group does not have a formal method of making decisions based upon majority vote. A good process to incorporate in this decision making process is to adapt to the group's function the principles set forth in the book, **Robert's Rules of Order**. Every group would be wise to use a recognized parliamentary process in making decisions. Such will save a lot of confusion and time.

On the other hand, no group should fall head over heels to make a decision, especially if it is a major decision. Careful consideration should be given to the making of any decision. It's usually a good practice to not make snap decisions. They always come unsnapped too easily. A thoroughly discussed, well thought-out decision is always best.

## Q. THE BIG DECISION PROBLEM

Let's continue the above point a little further. Every group has a different way of arriving at various decisions. The problem comes when the group decision-making process stunts the initiative of the individual (I've discussed this before), or when decision-making by the group begins to take the place of overseeing elderships. And too, the decision-making process in a large group may become the "judge and lawgiver" to the "large" minority. Notice that I said "large" minority. Keep that in mind.

The disagreement of one or two members with the majority is common in group decision making. But when the minority becomes almost the majority, the group needs to be careful here. By this I mean a split decision of say, six in favor and five against.

Disagreement will exist in groups, almost always. Everyone should have his say and his vote. But instead of having just a majority rule vote (one half plus one in favor), it might be better to have a two-thirds majority rule. That is, two-thirds or more in agreement before a particular motion is

carried. Such a method keeps the one or two "obstinates" from holding up the show. And at the same time, it puts more members in agreement with the proposed plan, at least theoretically. This is only a suggestion. I have worked in a group situation where majority rule worked out well. But there were those times when the group members were split in half on a decision. Such left an air of doubt in the minds of some concerning the stability of the decision made. The main thing to remember is to work efficiently and as harmoniously as possible.

Also, there's another possible problem here that could arise. Usually, every group member is overseen by a sponsoring eldership — each one should be, anyway. That's right and good. The individual missionary is responsible to his elders. He is their means of accomplishing a work on the field. But what if the group decision-making process begins to regulate the work of the missionary to the point of conflict with the wishes of an individual member's elders at home? I see this as a potential danger in group evangelism. I realize that many elders are slow, if not downright negligent, in making decisions concerning their missionary. But that does not open the door for some other group to step in and do their God-given work. We need to be super careful here that the group does not take the missionary away from his sponsoring church. He's their missionary, not the group's. He is directly responsible to them. And any decision concerning the missionary's work made by the group that contradicts the sponsoring elder's decisions should be overruled by the sponsoring eldership. A good practice to incorporate here in the group is that every member should have the right to withdraw himself from the vote on any matter if the specific decision on that matter would go against his conscience or the will of his elders. That should solve most of the problems.

Decisions made by the group should be on those matters that sponsoring churches cannot make or do not want to make. Now I realize that this is often a very fuzzy area. But the main thing to keep in mind is not to let the group

become a "society" which destroys the autonomy of the church back home, nor its relationship with its man on the field.

## R. THE WASTED TALENT PROBLEM

These last two points deal with talents or abilities to do things. Difficulties over proper use of the individual's talents is common in group work. There may be so much talent in a large group that some of it may go to waste. There may be ten preachers and only one pulpit available on Sunday morning. There may be two writers, but only one is needed to fulfill all of the group's publication needs. This may be an inherent problem with group work, especially for the first year or two on the field.

If talents overlap, and the need is not sufficient to demand the attention of all who have the ability to fulfill it, then someone will have to flip a coin. Or, why not just divide the work evenly between those who have the talents to do it?

Good group planning and organization usually gives everyone enough to do to keep everyone happy and content. I have yet to see a missionary who did not have his hands full at all times with a hundred things to do. (Read Matt. 25:14-30.)

## S. THE AMERICAN TALENT PROBLEM

In connection with the above problem there is this not uncommon phenomenon in group work. With all of the "American" talent around, national workers sometimes find themselves lost in the forest of abilities. After all, what can a little national "Indian" do, with all of the "big white chiefs" around? When a group of Americans moves in, it brings with it a wide background of education and training. Team members may be working with people who haven't even graduated from elementary school.

I don't know of any real solutions to this problem other than just being sensitive to it. Just remember, Americans haven't done it all, and they certainly do not know it all. I guess the main point is to practice a little humility. By all means, every effort must be made to put the new national convert to work. He can work as an apprentice at first. The main thing is that he must feel his responsibility to serve the Lord. (Read 1 Pet. 3:8; 5:5,6; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:2.)

These are some problems that could develop in a group effort if they are not checked. We need to be on constant guard against them. I've always believed that the solution to most of the problems — at least the social problems — in group evangelism can be solved by just being good Christians. And that includes love and humility and kindness and all other Christian attitudes. Most of the organizational problems can be settled by good planning and organizing.

But let me say again that the problems that could possibly be encountered in group work do not outweigh the advantages. Group evangelism is valid. Like any other method of mission work there are some problems involved in it. Most of these problems, though, can be overcome by just being conscious that they can exist. If we know they exist or can exist, then we can plan around them. And in recognizing that they could develop, we will be more conscious to thoroughly plan our group efforts. We should never hide our heads in the sand when discussing group problems. The road to an effective and continuing group effort starts first with the recognition of possible pitfalls further down the way.

## Chapter 5

# VOCATIONAL EVANGELISM

This and the following chapter are not necessarily on the theme of group evangelism. We'll be talking about vocational evangelism. This subject is related to group evangelism only in the sense of a group of vocational missionaries going to a specific field. Such groups have been formed as exoduses of Christians going to a specific state or country.

Defining true vocational evangelism is no simple task. Definitions are as varied as the number of authors who have written on the subject. Everyone has his idea of what a vocational missionary is, or should be. And I have mine. That's what I want to explain in this chapter.

A vocational missionary is a Christian who moves to a specific location for the purpose of evangelization, but does so by supporting himself with a secular job. Let's keep in mind in this and the following chapter that the type of vocational missionary I will be talking about is the spiritually dedicated family which has a true desire to identify with and convert peoples of a foreign culture. The identification aspect includes living in the culture of the nationals. Of course, this excludes most U.S. personnel working overseas for companies or military. What I am talking about here is many times not practiced by American businessmen who are sent by their companies to a foreign assignment. They are usually well paid (by American sources) and live accordingly. Their standard of living on the mission field usually erects a high cultural barrier between them and the national culture. Most of the time, they have never read one book on mission strategy. And too, they usually have not gone to the mission field primarily for the purpose of evangelization.



In this and the following chapter, I am discussing those who move into a foreign culture, find jobs in that culture from which they receive their pay and earnestly try to "culture in." This type of vocational missionary does not live in a military compound or form his own compound by living in a standard of living so far above the nationals that he is considered rich and culturally out of reach. The total purpose of the real vocational missionary is to **identify** with the local culture so that he can **evangelize** the local people. He is the one who has spent hours in cultural, mission and linguistic preparation.

You may think I am setting a high standard here for vocational mission work. You're right; I am. Too many times in the past (and present) American Christian vocational workers have gone overseas to work and have completely blundered a work because they had not thoroughly prepared themselves in cultural orientation and mission methods. There are few of the type of Christian vocational missionaries I am talking about here. That is one reason this subject has been introduced in this book. I would like to see more vocational missionaries. But, give us only those who want to be missionaries first, and then, vocational missionaries. And there is a difference between the motives of the "American worker" and the vocational missionary. The American business worker goes primarily to an overseas assignment because his company sends him. The real vocational missionary goes primarily because his Master and Saviour has sent him. And there's a big difference in the motivation between these two types of "goers." One goes primarily to make money, the other goes primarily to make Christians through the preaching of the gospel.

My definition of a vocational missionary would demand that they, vocational missionaries, be no less prepared spiritually and in mission methods than fulltime missionaries. Being unprepared for cross-cultural communication can do much harm in a foreign culture. But the real vocational missionary will be prepared. He will desire to evangelize.

He will desire to truly identify, to learn the foreign language and to really “culture in.” That is a true missionary and one that needs to be highly commended.

To me, the above picture of Christian missions is real evangelism. Every Christian in this picture becomes a missionary. Isn't that what the Christian life really is? We're missionaries wherever we are located, no matter who is supporting us. We are to saturate the world with Christian influence. That's the true nature of Christianity. And only when every Christian feels his or her responsibility to evangelize will we really take Christ into all the world.

And too, this is Biblical-based missions. Those early Christians in Acts 8:4 were scattered abroad. Everywhere they went they preached. That's Christianity, true Christianity. We will need to do the same thing today if we are ever going to evangelize this lost world. Christians need to take their vocations and their Christ into every state and city of the United States. They need to do the same with the rest of the world. And there is no priority there of who is first.

A good example of vocational mission work is that of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-4). And even another example is when Paul supported himself at times that he might be able to continue preaching and teaching the gospel (Acts 18:1-4; 1 Cor. 9:1-18; 2 Cor. 12:1,3). There's nothing wrong with a preacher supporting himself while he is preaching the gospel to lost souls. He's still a preacher. One doesn't have to be on the church payroll to be considered a messenger of the gospel. Every Christian is a minister of the good news. The church has no professional preachers and missionaries, at least the first century church didn't.

If we are going to evangelize the world, isn't this what we are going to have to do? Every Christian must believe he or she is a missionary, a disciple bearing the gospel, and every Christian must be a missionary for Christ. This attitude and

action is necessary if we are going to take Christ into all the world. Our secular jobs must only be a means to accomplish an end. The end is Matthew 28:19-20.

There are certain advantages to vocational evangelism. I want to discuss these advantages in this chapter. In the following chapter we'll talk about some weaknesses. First, though, I want to discuss vocational missionary work in general, not what is specifically involved in a team effort. The aspects of a team effort discussed in other chapters of this book should apply also to a vocational team effort. But here vocational missions in general needs to be discussed. Some vocational missionaries do presently exist in the church. They are doing a good work and should be praised for such.

Vocational mission work has greatly been accomplished through the support of Uncle Sam. No few military personnel have taken their Christianity to their foreign stations. That's great and should be practiced more. Such offers untold opportunities for the church. The advantages of this means of going by supporting yourself in a secular job are almost unlimited. Christians who have the opportunity to take an overseas assignment with a business should do so. Consider taking it for the cause of Christ. But let's keep in mind here that those who do should thoroughly prepare themselves in mission methods before they do such. No few problems have been created by uninformed American workers in a foreign culture. But on the other hand, let's keep in mind that much good has been done in the past by military men and American businessmen who have used their jobs to glorify God on foreign soil outside the U.S. borders.

But by keeping my definition of a true vocational missionary in mind, let's examine what are some possible advantages of this method of mission work.

## A. THE IDENTITY ADVANTAGE

A vocational missionary is in a position to possibly better

identify with the national. And too, the national can perhaps better identify with the missionary. There seems to always be a gap between "fulltime" workers and "secular" workers. Don't ask me why, I just know that such often exists. Every preacher does. But being a vocational worker on the mission field helps break down that barrier. That is one definite plus for vocational missions.

Unfortunately, many Americans move to a foreign country and then live on a high standard of living completely out of touch with the nationals. Such will certainly hinder any true identity. To the nationals, that type of American is just another "big rich American." Nationals usually feel no identity with those who live on this type of standard.

## B. THE NO-HIRELINE ADVANTAGE

In Ephesus and Corinth Paul made tents, not because he wanted to get out of the rain, but that he might make the way for the gospel. He kept men out of the rain by making tents and out of sin by preaching the gospel. There he was, a vocational missionary supporting himself. And in being such, he showed forth an example as well as overcoming accusations from those who might accuse him of preaching for money. To the Ephesian elders he wrote, "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. **Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.** In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak . . ." (Acts 20:33-35).

Paul escaped the accusation of being a hireling by supporting himself (2 Cor. 8:20). He wanted to prove that his mind was on things above. In 2 Corinthians 8:21 he said, "For we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." This was said in the context of his being supported by other churches. But because Paul had many times labored with his own hands in order to sound forth the truth, he could not be accused of

preaching for money. He was supported by churches at times and by himself at other times. And one of the reasons he supported himself at times was to escape that accusation of pagans that he was simply a hireling.

### C. THE NO-FINANCIAL- BURDEN ADVANTAGE

If a flock of missionaries supported themselves on the mission field, the church would be relieved of the burden of supporting them. Now don't any missionary jump on my back with all fours here. And don't any elder jump up and down shouting, "Yea!" Let's keep in mind what I'm trying to say here. And that is, **every Christian is a missionary**. He is a person with a message, the good news, and that makes him a missionary. Every Christian should be trying to evangelize. Right? And of course, every Christian can't be on full support.

We can have church supported missionaries; but we can have **more** missionaries if others went out as vocational missionaries and would help support the other missionaries who are or can work on a fulltime basis. Isn't that what Paul did in Acts 20:34? He supported himself, as well as those who worked with him. That way we could have both vocational missionaries and fulltime missionaries. As I see it, the main reason for supporting someone **fulltime** is that he might be able to do more work on a **fulltime** basis. It's not a matter of just giving someone a "job." It is a serious matter of taking the gospel to the lost as fast and efficiently as possible.

Now I realize that the one taught should communicate (pay) to "him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). That's Biblical. And I know that Paul said he wronged the church in Corinth because he did not take their support (2 Cor. 12:13). (He took support from other churches in order to preach to them, 2 Cor. 11:8). But what I am saying here is that not every missionary of the church can be on full support. Some can. Some can't. We need those who can

and those who can't. Those who go as vocational missionaries can relieve the church to support the ones who cannot go as such. At least this all sounds good on paper. But I do think that this is a Biblical principle and that we should incorporate such in our mission work. It worked for Paul and it can work for us today.

#### D. THE EXAMPLE ADVANTAGE

"Virtuous men do good by setting themselves up as models before the public." Montaigne said that. And this is what Paul did in his work. He exhorted and reminded, as did Jesus, that Christians "are seen as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15; cf. Matt. 5:11-13). Christians are "searchlights." They're searching for the lost as well as shining forth the location of safety.

Here is where a vocational missionary sometimes has an advantage over the fulltime preacher (fully paid by the church, that is). The paid preacher is put on a pedestal in the native community whether he deserves it or not. That's one of the inherent "evils" of the work. He is sort of recognized as being "good" because he is a preacher. But the vocational worker who truly identifies and lives the Christian life is put on a pedestal by the community because he has earned that position by his daily living, that is, if he leads a good Christian life. He has worked at a job just like everyone else. He has overcome the temptations which many times are ever present for those who work with men of the world. But he has overcome. He has conquered darkness with the light. And everybody can see that. Such gives them hope of doing the same. That example possibly gives the vocational missionary that little edge of influence above and beyond the fulltime worker.

#### E. THE INDEPENDENT ADVANTAGE

One reason why many missionaries desire to be self-

supporting is because of the independence factor. One can be his own boss and not have to worry about keeping all his supporters happy and satisfied. He is relieved from that pressure of having to make everything look rosy in the newsletters so his support won't be dropped. (This is a fact in some situations. Brethren back home are just too trigger happy to drop support when they don't think things are going right in a field they know nothing about.) The vocational missionary is independent when it comes to making decisions. He doesn't have to wait on an unresponsive and unconcerned eldership. He can be independent in decision-making and in action. Many like such an arrangement. And I feel that is their prerogative.

But here there may be some doubt as to whether or not this is an advantage. There is nothing like good counsel from wise elders back in the States. And too, if a vocational missionary has been sent out by a stateside church which has paid his way to the field, the missionary to some extent should be under the oversight of the elders of the sending church. It all depends upon how much of an active role the sending church wants to play in the mission of the vocational missionary. I do think it is a matter of opinion. I seriously doubt whether those who went into all the world in the first century were either sent or sponsored by a congregation back home. They just went forth in masses to preach to the masses.

There are probably several other points that could be included here. I'll let you do that. My main concern is to let it be known that valid vocational missions is a method which needs to be practiced more in the mission efforts of the church. It worked in the life of Paul and others in the first century. It will work today.

Let's not segregate vocational mission groups and mission groups that are on a fully supported basis. I'm not prejudiced. Groups have been formed with some of the members being supported by the church, while others supported them-

selves. That's what Paul and his company seem to have done according to Acts 20:34. And, in many instances, such an arrangement has worked out well. Others have gone into the mission field on full support with the purpose of working into self support. Such has worked in some cases and not in others. Much depends upon the planning, and the type of vocation and culture into which one plans to go. There is a mountain of variables here. And too, keep in mind that I am not limiting vocational missions only to foreign soil. Vocation mission groups have successfully gone to areas in the States. If one wants to do that, that's alright. At least he is going as a missionary.

There are all sorts of possibilities with this type of going. The main thing is to go, and go, and go. And then let us preach, and preach, and preach. That's our responsibility as Christians. Our occupation is Christianity whether we're being supported by the Air Force, Union Carbide, the Peace Corps or the church of our Lord. Our objective is to evangelize. Our drive is the fervent desire to save souls. And we must never settle for less — not even an ounce less.



## Chapter 6

# WEAKNESSES OF VOCATIONAL EVANGELISM

Usually along with the advantages of any mission method come some disadvantages. That seems to be the rule with mission methods. And so it is with vocational mission work. As a means of evangelizing the world in our generation vocational missions seem to offer a real hope. Unless we infuse within our minds the Biblical imperative that every Christian is a crusader for Christ, a man with the message of his Master, we will certainly be hard pressed to turn the world up-side-down for God. All half-hearted evangelism ever really did was to cause a few tremors. But we can't settle for that. We need an earthquake. And it will take every Christian to shake the world apart for Jesus. There will be problems involved in doing that but we should never let problems stop us from doing that which Christ has commanded us to do.

But now, let us notice some weaknesses of vocational missions. Again, some of these are inherent weaknesses. On the other hand, some could just develop if we're not on the lookout for them. Concerning vocational missionaries in groups, the chapter on the weaknesses of group evangelism would apply (see chapter 4). But most of what I am about to say here should be taken in the vein that this is a comparison with those who are working on a fulltime basis. Those missionaries who can give their fulltime to preaching do have some definite advantages over those who don't. That will become obvious as we notice the following points.

The reader should also keep in mind the type of spiritually dedicated, well-prepared vocational missionary that I described in the previous chapter. It is this type of missionary that usually encounters the following problems.

## A. THE HARD TIMES PROBLEM

Let's start first with the financial areas. And at the top of the list is the "hard times" problem. For Americans, this can be a real problem. Americans like to live in big houses, drive big cars, eat big steaks, and usually carry around big heads. But in a foreign country things aren't so big. In fact, they aren't big at all. They're small — small houses, small cars and small wages. That all adds up to some real financial problems for the vocational missionary on foreign soil. In the States, its not so bad. But here, I'm talking about doing mission work on a vocational basis on foreign soil.

The way of living in a foreign country is usually very drastically different from that of the U.S. The standard of living is low because the economy is at a lower level. Generally, an American family living in a foreign country will have to live on a much lower standard of living than in the U.S., if they truly want to identify with that foreign culture. And that's hard for some to do. It calls for a great deal of sacrifice, and Americans are notoriously known for not wanting to sacrifice a thing. But of course, that should not be the attitude of a dedicated Christian.

If an American is planning to move to a foreign country for the purpose of working at a secular job in that country, he should do much planning and investigation of that culture. One should thoroughly study the economic and commercial systems of the specific country. There's a big difference between the tax systems, business systems, etc. of foreign countries and that of the "good old U.S. of A." Some systems even operate on a basis of dishonesty. I know of a government that assumes that it is going to be cheated out of so many taxes by tax cheats. So, in order to receive what it needs in tax money, it jacks up the taxes and lets the cheats continue cheating. Sounds crazy?

So, can you as a Christian maintain a business in an economic system that depends on bribes or under-the-table opera-

tions? Better check things out before you make the move. I mean, really check them out.

But anyway, back to my first thoughts about sacrifice. Americans are spoiled children when it comes to living standards. We'll have to admit that. But we can adapt to lower standards of living. We can! Our cause as Christians necessitates such. There is no worldly "thing" that cannot be given up for Christ, even washing machines and TV sets and boats and dish washers. Remember, almost all of the rest of the world has been living without these things for years. (Read Mk. 10:29,30.)

## B. THE FURLOUGH PROBLEM

And then there may be the problem of going to and from the field of labor in the vocational mission effort. It costs money to sail the seven seas today. Such cost for taking a family ten thousand miles away may be too burdensome for the budget of some. Those who are sent by American companies usually have a yearly paid trip back to the U.S. That's good. Those in the Armed Services also have similar advantages. But for the self-supported vocational missionary and his family, they have to do it on their own. And that can be tough financially.

This could be solved if churches would realize the importance of sending qualified vocational missionaries to every society under heaven. Some Pentecostal groups in Brazil pay the moving expenses of families — **qualified** families — who are going as vocational missionaries to other countries or other areas of Brazil. That's not a bad idea. We ought to do better. When furlough time comes, the church could bring a vocational missionary back for a rest.

But too, if the identification is complete — at least that's a good goal — there may not be need for frequent furloughs. I know of some vocational missionaries who have been

overseas for years without returning to the stateside scene. Sometimes they feel no need for such. But most of the time they just can't afford it.

I believe that we should reconsider the vocational missionary program of missions. Isn't it really a valid method of evangelizing the world? We could send hundreds of families into the field by this means.

### C. THE NO-HOME-CHURCH PROBLEM

Why is it that vocational missionaries have to go it on their own — all alone? Why can't some church get behind them and stay there in times of trouble? Usually, vocational missionaries have to launch out into the deep without any ropes connected to home. They have no "home church." There's no specific church back home that is standing behind them in a specific way. And a lot of roaming without any homing can add up to a lot of loneliness. Too many missionaries have launched out into the deep and just sunk because no one back home cared.

But this problem could be partly solved if a stateside church would establish a good vocational missionary program by sending out groups of vocational missionaries. And those going could establish close ties by letters and newsletters with a specific stateside church. Just because a man is going to go it on his own financially doesn't mean we have to let him remain alone.

### D. THE LONG-DAY PROBLEM

This is an inherent problem in some vocational mission works. After a long, hard day of work, vocational missionaries usually are too tired or have no time to do "church work." I know of some vocational missionaries who have become frustrated because they had to spend so much time making a living that they had no time left during the week to do that

which they loved to do most — evangelize. Truly, the 40-hour work week in the States has been a blessing to the church. But on foreign soil, there is usually no such thing as a 40-hour work week, or even a 50-hour work week. Survival many times depends upon long days and long weeks. This is a major problem with vocational mission work in some areas. And this is a problem which is not readily solved, especially in a tropical climate where energies are drained away by heat, insects and illnesses.

### E. THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

And then there is language. When one goes to a foreign country, those first few months can be tough. Not knowing the language can lead to all sorts of interesting problems. And trying to find a job without knowing the native language can be a lot of fun. Actually, it probably just can't be done.

And then, many countries will just not let you in if you do not have a job or support secured. So it would be better to have a job promised you in the foreign country, before you go. (More on this in a later point.) But concerning language, there usually must be a few months reserved after arrival at the field which should be dedicated entirely to language study.

Again, some stateside church could support the missionary during his first six months or so. That would allow him some time to really get his language study well down the road. Or, one could just go to those nations which speak English. That could settle most of the problems here. But most countries speak other languages than English. So, time must be allowed for language learning. The language here could be one of the greatest obstacles in vocational missions.

### F. THE STUDY PROBLEM

The Bible is still the source of faith (Rom. 10:17). It is

still the bread of life which is able to build us up (Acts 20: 32; 1 Thess. 2:13). But many times missionaries — even fulltime missionaries — get themselves so bogged down with so many different programs of work that they have little time for personally edifying Bible study. This is a special problem for vocational missionaries. No few missionaries have headed for the home ports because they were spiritually drained on the mission field. Most of the time the reason for this is because they just have not siphoned off spiritual strength from the Word of God. Vocational missionaries can get so involved in their secular work and “church work” that they forget their daily Bible study. And numerous problems can develop if we do that.

### G. THE FAMILY PROBLEM

Sometimes — well, many times — missionaries spend so much time in doing “church work” that they have little time for their own families. Somehow the family of God as a whole takes the place of that special physical family unit. Vocational missionaries need to be on guard here. They are pressed for time like no other missionary is. We must remember, though, that it will be a sad Great Day if we stand before the “pearly gates” knowing that some of our own immediate family is not there because we forgot to spend time with those souls especially entrusted to us. Let’s take time with our family. Look at the great impact they, our children, can have on the coming generations.

### H. THE VISA PROBLEM

Probably one of the main problems associated with vocational mission work is just getting into any specific country. Many countries will let a missionary in who has his support guaranteed by supporters outside the country. But if one plans on going a country to acquire a job in that country from which to earn support, then the problems of getting a visa can be tough, if not impossible. Most countries just won’t

let you in. Of course, those in the military or those sent by an American firm usually have no problem in acquiring a visa. But if you are on your own, it's different. This problem will severely limit your choice of countries. But if one cannot find a country that will let him in, there are always those un-evangelized areas of the United States which are still mission fields. We should, and could, saturate those areas with thousands of vocational missionaries. We ought to have exoduses of Christians going forth from the "Bible Belt" to the yet un-evangelized areas of America and Canada.

Most of the above points have been said in reference to vocational missionary work in general, not specifically vocational groups. Most of the problems could be alleviated if we would have "sponsoring" churches for qualified and trained vocational missionaries as we do for fully supported missionaries. At least, that would remind the vocational worker that he has been sent out with a purpose.

Again, let's keep in mind here that I am talking about **qualified and trained** missionaries whose means of support is vocational work. Just because John Teacher is a good worker in the home church does not mean that he will be an **effective** worker in cross-cultural communication. John Teacher should have a solid education in the Bible. That's not enough, though, for effective mission work. He should be sent to a school to study missions and cultural anthropology. That will save him a lot of pains and mistakes in foreign mission work.

The main thing to remember, though, is that we should never send a man and his family off into that big cold world and forget him, no matter what the source of his support is. Let's send out ambassadors for Christ, but let's not cut the ropes that tie their work with our mission as a whole. Just because a man is not receiving his support from the church does not mean that he is no missionary. We have no "clergy" missionaries. Every Christian is a missionary. And we should stand behind anyone who is willing to sacrifice the luxuries of American living to take Christ to the world.

## Chapter 7

# ADVANTAGES OF JOINING AN EXISTING GROUP

What about joining a group of missionaries already on the field and established in a specific work? I think this is a unique situation and one that is not usually covered in mission textbooks. But it is an area of study we must consider, being that group evangelism is becoming more popular.

This is a unique aspect of missions with some very unique points which must be considered both by the team already on the field as well as by the prospective new member. The prospective new member is going into an already established work, and an already established fellowship. So, what are some advantages for the new missionary joining forces with an already established mission effort? What are some disadvantages of going to the mission field on this basis? I'll talk about advantages in this chapter and hold the disadvantages for the following chapter.

Most of what I want to say in this chapter deals with a new missionary's first year or so of work on the field. So I'm talking about advantages for that first critical year; advantages of going, as a new missionary, to a field of labor where there is an already established group effort.

### A. THE EXPERIENCE ADVANTAGE

"He gains wisdom in a happy way who gains it by another." So said Plautus. It's true that the school of experience is the fool's school, a school of hard knocks. There was the man who signed his credit card application, "Henry Smith, BBBFF." The examining Credit Manager inquired, "Mr. Smith, you have a very unusual degree. Where did you



acquire it?" "Experience! I have had to declare bankruptcy three times and have been fired twice."

Among members of a group of missionaries who have labored on the field for several years there is a ton of experience. Someone said, "Experience is an expensive form of knowledge which we let others have the benefit of for nothing." And that's right. When joining a group of missionaries one has the advantage of their experience. You don't have to bungle over some of the same old territory. Methods that have been tried in a specific culture can be evaluated by reflection on past experience. Experience can be costly, but the right evaluation of it can give a full refund. This is a definite advantage for joining an already existing group of missionaries on the field.

## B. THE STABLE-NERVES ADVANTAGE

Every missionary remembers those first few months on the mission field, especially that first week or two. He was probably lost, confused and just plain scared. Of course, he never tells anybody this. He's supposed to have great faith, you know. He has a **superfaith!** Well, at least that's what everybody else thinks, or is supposed to think.

But we human Christians — we're all such, you know — need help in times of crisis. And there's plenty of crises in mission work, especially during that first year. In going to the field to join a group of Christians who are already there, one can have that needed helping hand through those first few desperate weeks.

And in the midst of culture shock, the newly arrived missionary has the help of others who have passed through that valley of "the shadow of death." A 'hang-in-there-Joe' encouragement can mean the difference between a short stay on the field and a long stay. "Longer" missionaries (those who stay longer on the field) are more common in groups

than “shorter” missionaries (those who stay only a year or so). And a man has a better chance of becoming a “longer” if he joins a group effort.

### C. THE ADAPTATION ADVANTAGE

Cultures throughout the world are different. There are some things you can do in one culture that you just can't do in another. When we try to bring cultural cues from one culture over to another, things can get pretty embarrassing, as any missionary knows. Anyone who has gone into a different culture usually begins to walk funny; that's because his foot is in his mouth most of the time. One seems to never say the right thing or make the right motions that first year or so. There are so many little things that are different, it sometimes becomes confusing – and usually embarrassing, too – to keep them all straight.

But when one joins an already established group of missionaries he can get out of some of those identification cramps. A little orientation can sometimes save a lot of embarrassment. Advance warning about certain words or motions with the hands can sure help one keep his foot out of his mouth.

### D. THE PREPARATIONS ADVANTAGE

One of the great advantages of going to a field where somebody is already located is that they can make some preparations for your coming. They can check out housing, set up language study and give you some idea of your work. Such assistance gives security to the family going to the mission field for the first time. They do not go into a new work cold and spend countless hours searching and seeking for doctors, language teachers, schools, etc. The Bible says seek and ye shall find, but that doesn't necessarily apply to newly arrived missionaries. Joining a group of missionaries already established on the field can save much time just in the process of settling-in.

## E. THE LANGUAGE ADVANTAGE

Have you ever moved to a country that spoke a language different from yours? If you haven't, you're missing a treat. There is nothing like being in a place where you can't understand anyone and no one can understand you. After being in such a situation for about two months one can get rather frustrated — and hungry, if he doesn't know how to ask for food.

I don't have to tell you here of the privilege of climbing off an airplane into the arms of someone who can understand your desperate cries. Those who go to a mission field where someone is waiting with open arms and an understandable language have this beautiful privilege.

## F. THE SPECIALTY ADVANTAGE

In going and joining an established group there is the advantage of seeing a special need and fulfilling that need with your special talent. You may be a good preacher but a poor writer; a good personal worker, but a poor pulpit proclaimer; a good printer but a weak personal evangelist. Usually, but not always, there is a hole into which you, as a newcomer, can fit in a group effort.

In group work you can use your specialty. You can use it and be happy. One doesn't have to be a jack-of-all-trades to join a group. There isn't the problem of doing sixteen odd jobs when you really only know how to do one — at least most of the time this is true in a group effort. You don't have to turn on **all** the lights or pay **all** the bills **all** the time. There's room for specialty.

There are many advantages to joining an already established team of missionaries on the field. Doing such also prevents many problems. But like everything else, there are some definite weaknesses in doing such. So let's leave the advantages here and go to the other side of the subject in the following chapter.

## Chapter 8

# PROBLEMS IN JOINING AN EXISTING GROUP

As stated in the previous chapter, there are some definite advantages in joining an already established group of missionaries on the foreign field. But there's two sides to this coin. To look only at the bright side of the proposition is far from being objective. And we must be objective in mission work.

I realize that this subject is rarely touched on in mission textbooks. That's why someone needs to say some definite things about joining an established group of missionaries. There are some weaknesses in making this move to join an "establishment." In fact, there are some good old downright problems. And if you're considering this adventure, I would like to propose some warnings for your consideration.

Of course, some of the material here will overlap with that which has already been presented in the chapter on the weaknesses of group evangelism. But that's all right. I want us to look at the whole game, not just the last quarter. I think this may help save a lot of frustration on the part of the one about to take such a step. And as I said before, if we're not open and outright with this, we will be neglecting a great segment of concern surrounding group evangelism. And as more groups begin to form, this will become a needed subject for discussion.

Let me add here that the variation of the problems in joining large or small groups can be as far apart as black and white, at least sometimes. Not all of these problems will be incurred when joining a small group. In fact, some will not even be faced when joining a large group. It all depends on

the group. You will have to apply the problem under discussion to your specific situation. So make your own application and investigation. But carefully investigate the group before you go. That should be an understood rule on this subject.

I had better say it again here just as a reminder. I'm not against group evangelism. I'm not against joining an already established group, either. In fact, it would be good for most new missionaries to join first a group effort for those first few years on the field. So don't twist what I say in this chapter to mean that I am against group evangelism or even against joining a group. I just think we should bring out some things that need to be considered before you make that final leap aboard that jet destined for some far off land. So with that in mind, here go some thoughts on this subject.

#### A. THE WHERE-TO-WORK PROBLEM

Every new recruit of an established team is showered with multitudes of Macedonian calls from the group with which he is casting his lot. If there are five existent churches in the area, undoubtedly all of them will want him to work with them. And if there is a specific program of work going on, such as a Bible camp, Bible correspondence course program, leadership training program, etc., there will be a multitude of calls from those working with these. Let's admit it, there's a lot to be done in any mission work and every missionary wants someone to come and help him.

And too, in working with large groups there is always that tension of whether to work more with a local congregation or to work with group efforts that demand a considerable amount of time (radio, Bible camps, schools of training, etc). These big programs do great works and are "necessary." But every member of a group must decide what percentage of time he is going to spend with a big program of work that may contribute to indirect growth of the church, and what

percentage of time he is going to spend teaching Bible classes, preaching, visiting and engaging in other works that deal more directly with church growth. There will always be that choice of where to work.

In relation to recruiting, and as I said before, every missionary on the field wants someone to come and help him. Missionaries on the field are always calling for help. They are always needing someone to come and help in the work. The reasons for this is logical, there's a mountain of work to be done and so few laborers to do it. But the real tension comes when there is a difference of opinion between the "comer" and the "caller" concerning what type of work the "comer" should do. "Callers" should realize that new missionaries, while in the States, hardly ever have a completely accurate view of the actual mission work where they are going, even if they have been fortunate enough to make a survey trip there. New recruits usually have their heads in the clouds in the States. Condensation usually doesn't start to take place until after several weeks or months on the actual mission field.

We need to let a man come, or go, unburdened by what we think he ought to do. New recruits should make their decisions only after they have been on the field for several months. Those first few months should be dedicated to language study, anyway. And during those first months, time can be spent in evaluating the field of work. After careful evaluation, one can apply himself accordingly.

## B. THE NICHE PROBLEM

Everybody needs to find and do his own thing. That's just natural, and necessary. We want to find our purpose. We want to feel needed. And we want to feel fulfilled after accomplishing what we can do best. But in joining a group of workers already on the field, this may be a problem. Let me explain this.

I know there is the old saying among missionaries that

there is always too much to do and too little time to do it. That's usually true of any missionary's schedule. There's a lot of work to be done. In large groups every member must feel that he is really fulfilling a special need of that group. Everyone can teach as many home Bible classes as he can find. But what really justifies the existence of a group on the field is the ability to do some large scale works which the nationals could not do at the beginning of the mission effort -- hopefully, they'll be able to take these works later on. And every member of the group must find his niche in those group works. If he doesn't he'll be like a dry leaf on a windy day, just blown from one place to another.

And usually, every man feels he needs a work over which he has control and can make the final decisions. It is my personal belief that group decision-making as a whole should allow sufficient room for individual decisions in particular group works that will stimulate individual initiative. In other words, the individual members should be able to make instant decisions concerning their specific works without the decision of the entire group. Of course, there can be a lot of leeway here with different groups. But the main thing to remember is not to let a member be trodden down in his work by an overbearing group decision-making process. Let him be an individual fulfilling a need to the greatest of his capacity. By doing such one can find his need and feel fulfilled, not frustrated.

### C. THE CHANGE PROBLEM

Going to join ranks with veteran missionaries? It's good if you are. But there are some things here you need to be on the look out for. You can't teach an old dog new tricks -- so I've been told. Joining forces with those who have been on the field for several years does have its advantages, but there are also some disadvantages in doing this. Old dogs are sometimes slow in changing. And when an old and established group has been infiltrated by new recruits, the battlefield sometimes shifts from saint against sinner to saint against saint.

With new missionaries come new ideas. And that is good. We're always learning new ways of doing things. And older missionaries need to realize that. Seniority does not always have the ultimate hold on all knowledge. Experience on the scene does offer its advantages. Nobody doubts that. But sometimes businesses call in outside blood to look over the operation. Sometimes, we can be too close to the forest to see the trees. And big businesses realize this. They are receptive to the counsel of new workers who have recently joined the organization. A new and fresh look at an old established situation can be profitable.

But let's wait a minute here. Let's not think that the young missionary with a fresh masters degree in missions is a master at missions. New members should bridle their tongues and exercise a little patience, especially for the first year on the field. In this, as in anything dealing with mission work, it is not good to make any drastic decisions during that first year on the field. Wait and see. Be patient and patient and patient.

But older missionaries must remember that just because they've always done something a certain way does not mean that they should always continue to do it that way. Let's not keep an old sacred cow method around which is not producing any milk just because she's become a team mascot. Older members of groups should be willing to change as the group's philosophy changes. And group philosophy will always change when new members are added. Any one who is immune to change is going to have a hard time on the mission field, and in life as a whole -- change is just a part of "missioning."

The idea that a certain method of work is traditional is a farce. Every group should be receptive to new and better ideas. And one source of those new ideas is the adding of new members to the group. But new group members should realize that changing some old habits of "veteran" missionaries is like renovating an old building. You have to pull so many nails that after a while you don't know whether you're pulling nails or biting nails. Your teeth just hurt all the same.



## D. THE COOPERATION PROBLEM

Remember what I said about preachers agreeing on things? It's usually a rarity. In the local congregation situation in the States a preacher may be allowed a lot of leeway in doing his work. He's sometimes like a farmer who doesn't have to ask anyone when he is going to plant or harvest his crops. And thus, he becomes very independent. Have you ever tried to get a group of farmers together to work the same farm? Neither have I. But being an ex-farmer, I can assume that it would be difficult. Well, preachers aren't much different.

So here's a man who has been working his own farm in a local congregation in the States. He decides to go to the mission field. Great! He decides to join a group of missionaries on the field. Oops! Something is going to have to give here. Either he is going to have to learn how to work cooperatively with other men or else he is going to have to work alone. If he can't work with other men, then it would be best for him to go it on his own. And as I said before, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. But we should always develop a spirit of being able to work together with other people. And preachers should be the first to show how it is done.

A similar situation as that above may develop with those who have retired from the military and join groups already on the field. Sergeant so-and-so must realize that he's not a sergeant anymore. He's just another private. Yes, cooperation can sometimes be hard to learn. But it's a lesson of life everyone must learn, especially those working in group mission efforts.

Those who are considering the possibility of joining an already established group of missionaries need to consider this point seriously. It's not wrong if a man wants to be a "loner" in his work. But to put a "loner" in a group may cause severe frustration, even to the point where he returns to the States. It would be better if he would go to another geographical area to plow his own field, than to return to the States.

## E. THE IDENTIFICATION PROBLEM

One of the greatest tasks of the newly arrived missionary is to begin identifying with his new culture. I say begin, because I do not think total identification is ever really possible. It's just a great ideal. We'll never become total nationals. As American missionaries, we'll always be foreign and different. So let's pull our heads out of this "fairy tale" notion.

But nevertheless, we should all give it our best to identify. Joining a group of "American" missionaries on the field, though, can slow down the identification process. When old man Culture Shock comes knocking at our door — and he usually knocks at every door — we are able to run out the back door to our American allies. Well, that's good, to a certain extent. The problem comes when that's all we want to do. Instead of roughing it out in culture and language, we may retreat to fellowship only with our co-workers. This can be one of the unique problems in working with larger groups. Everyone who is joining a group should find that balance between association with the national culture and language and association with his fellow workers. And there is a balance there — somewhere.

## F. THE GENERATION GAP PROBLEM

I think Paul had this problem partially in mind when he wrote to Timothy, "let no man despise thy youth . . . " (1 Tim. 4:12). In an older established group of missionaries, naturally there are going to be older missionaries. But here comes a fresh and new and young missionary. Up springs the old "generation gap." And up spring some problems.

Both the older and younger missionaries may think they have all the mission methods down pat. The younger has just popped out of mission school and thinks he has all the answers. The old may have much experience but may be ignorant of new methods, or just unwilling to change old habits. Whatever the case, there will undoubtedly be some

tension here.

And too, there is simply age to add to the confusion. I don't have to go into that, but older missionaries must remember what Paul said to Timothy, "Let **no man** despise thy youth." I've always wondered why Paul never said somewhere else something to older men like, "Despise the youth of no man." 1 Timothy 4:12 is a statement to a young man, not an old man. It was probably so directed for the purpose of starting where the problem usually starts — with the younger. Paul did tell Timothy how to "let no man despise his youth." It's in the next statement, "Be thou an **example** unto them that believe, in work, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity." Usually, the older have already learned these basic lessons of Christianity. Now it's time for the younger to learn them. After all, isn't the generation gap usually caused by a flippant, haughty youngster who thinks he has the world by the tail? It usually takes a while to find out that the world has him by the tail. One thing that Paul is saying is that the younger must earn respect. It is not given to them free. Every young missionary needs to remember that.

So we must realize that the generation gap is a possible problem in joining an established mission effort. If younger missionaries can't get along with "daddy" missionaries, then they should start their own works. But too, this shoe may fit on the other foot. If an older man feels he cannot join a group of younger missionaries, then he should look for other fields.

## G. THE COMMITMENT PROBLEM

I'm not talking about commitment to Christ here. It's understood that we should be committed to Christ before even faintly considering foreign mission work. I'm talking about commitment to a group effort.

Every new member to a group should consider his commitment to the group effort. One of the keys for the "sticktoitive-

ness" of any group is the dogged determination of every group member to stay together. That is absolutely necessary if the group is going to survive. Every member must make a personal commitment to the group for the purpose of continuing the effort. If that is not done, things will fall apart at the seams when the waves get rough. What I mean by this is that when disagreement sets in, every member must be willing to sit it out. Evangelism in groups depends upon the individual commitment of each member to that group.

But here's the problem. A new member comes in. He is not all that loyal to the group effort. He is coming in to something he didn't start; he didn't struggle to keep it going. He does not feel as committed to the survival of the group, or some work, as those who have been working with it for so many years. It's not a sacred cow effort to him. So when times get rough, he is not all that committed to keeping things sewed up. And when the number of new members grows considerably in a group, this problem of keeping things together may become quite severe. The group may break up long before the national church is ready to take over the evangelistic effort of the church in that specific area. And that may cause the loss of several years of work.

Every group needs a certain amount of maintenance to keep it rolling smoothly. It takes a little grease to keep the squeaks out. But new members may be sand and not grease. Every new member should make up his mind as to which he is going to be — grease or sand. If sand, then he had better reconsider his joining that particular group. But too, if one is going to be sand to a group effort, it may be best that he be no part of a group effort at all. One of the first rules of attitude in having an effective team is that every member must be team minded. We must believe in the group as an effective means of taking the gospel to the world.

## H. THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

I have put this problem here because it is associated with

the preceding two. There are several factors involved in this. All could be a possible problem in joining an established group of missionaries which has been on the field for a number of years.

Every group becomes a type of society within itself. Certain social "group cues" are established as the group grows older — I'm talking more about larger groups here. Members begin to do some things in a "customary" way and to react in an almost predictable manner. The attitude of the group as a whole becomes established. That's only natural, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with it. But every new member should realize this. Let's note some specific cases.

The established group may set a standard of living within itself. It may become accepted that everyone should live in grass huts. Or, that everyone should live in the middle class range of the specific culture. Or, that everyone should live in a specific part of the village or city. Or, that the customary recreation every week has to be engaged in by all members of the group. But when a new member moves in and breaks away from the customary way of living, he may face some social pressures from the "establishment." The established group members may think that he is odd, uncooperative, different or just downright obstinant if he doesn't "join in" in their way of doing things. The new member may be tagged a non-conformist just because he likes to do things a little differently.

Every prospective new member should get to know to the best of his ability the missionaries he is about to join. But this does not mean that he has to conform to their social standard of living. Older missionaries on the field should never pressure a new member into living the way they do. Maybe he has hay fever and can't live in grass huts. After a year or so on the field, let new members determine their own way of identifying and living in the new culture. We must remember that one is not "different" just because he does things differently from others. We're all different from one

another. And we must recognize one another's difference . . . and respect it, too.

Much could probably be added to this list. There are some definite disadvantages in joining an already established group of workers on the field. It may be a general rule that the older the group (that is, the longer it has been a group on the field) the harder it is for the new member to join and fit in. It may be best that prospective new members find groups which fit more within the scope of their own desires. If they cannot find such a group, then it might be good to form one of their own. Whatever the cause, groups and those who plan to join them should be conscious of the possible problems listed in this chapter.

I'm not saying that every group has all of these problems, or that one will encounter all these problems in joining a specific group. It's just the fact that every group normally has at least one of them. And when joining a group, one will face at least one or two or three of these problems. Every group ointment has a fly in it for the new member coming in. The fly will probably stay there, so one should consider whether or not he can live with it before he joins up.

Let me re-emphasize here that new missionaries should join a group effort when first going to the mission field. Such will save untold problems for them. At least, it would be good to work with a man who has been on the field for a few years. After a period of time with an older, more experienced missionary, then one can move on to new ground if he wishes. But those first few steps with an experienced missionary can be precious in beginning a new life as a missionary. Of course, this is not absolute advice. If one wants to jump into a mission effort all by himself, then that's just fine. But just jumping into deep water without first dabbling around in the shallow areas can be shocking.

## Chapter 9

# GOING AS A MISSIONARY

What about preparation before going to the mission field? Is it advisable for one to head for the mission field with little or no preparation? Can't one work things out when he arrives on the field? Won't just a little faith and a little Bible do the trick? These are some questions for which you should personally know answers.

The thoughts in this chapter are suggested to help prevent some possible future frustrations. It would be a shame to have to buy that return ticket home within the first year or so on the field because one went unprepared. We must be prepared and this chapter is directed toward that end. This is just advice. But I don't want to be like the man who could see troubles so far ahead that he always had some in sight. These are only some suggestions that might prevent some possible problems.

There will always be some problems in life, and especially, in mission life. But there is no problem that cannot be overcome by faith and a touch of wisdom. We should never let problems get us down. One of the best missionaries of all time once said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). At another time he said, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). And, "if God be for us, who can stand against us?" No one can! As someone once said, "God and I make a majority in any situation."

We must, though, use our heads. God didn't give them to us to hold up hats or just hang ears on. Jesus took about three years to train the first twelve missionaries. And the

apostle Paul was a man of no little training. So we need to do some training before we launch out into the deep.

Let's cover this subject in two ways. First, I want to discuss preparation for the individual going to the mission field. In this chapter we'll consider this area. This would apply to a missionary whether he is going as a "loner" or a "grouper." Secondly, I want to say a few things about going as a group. I'll cover that territory in the following chapter.

But now, let's talk about some things every missionary should consider doing before he packs his bag, grabs his wife and children and heads for that far off mission land. These are things that deal both with increasing maturity and wisdom, as well as knowledge. And every missionary should be thoroughly prepared in all these areas. Didn't Jesus say, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"?

## A. LOCAL PREACHING

Before a missionary becomes a "foreign" missionary it would be good for him to work with a local congregation in the States for a period of time, perhaps two to five years. Of course, this time span can be as flexible as a rubber hose. The main thing is to get one's feet wet in the local wading pool before he jumps into the deep end of the big world pool. Doing such might save one from jumping into a whirlpool, and then drown for lack of preparation. To dash from the college graduation platform, to the travel agency, and then to the airport, isn't too wise when it comes to mission work.

Time spent in a familiar culture with a local congregation helps in many areas. One has an opportunity to mature spiritually. There is the opportunity of learning how to work with people. There's the opportunity to study, teach and preach. And by doing such in the States, many of the kinks can be worked out of one's preaching before he gets to the field. On the mission field, unfortunately, one's word as an American missionary is often accepted at face value. But this



is not necessarily so in the stateside local church situation. One needs that year or two with a local stateside church before going to the field.

One of the greatest reasons for working with a stateside church before going to a foreign work is the opportunity to work with elders and understand the stateside church as a whole. As a young preacher working with patient and understanding elders, one can glean a crop of knowledge. Just learning how elders work and think is worth the experience. That way, when you're "over there" you can half-way understand their situation and problems. When they sometimes forget you — and they will — you can understand their situation of being constantly showered with local problems and works which have a tendency of keeping their thinking local. So, spend some time with a local church before catching the first boat off to Paris or Hong Kong. Consider your service in the States as a part of your schooling for foreign mission work.

I might make a note here of a danger that is involved in this suggestion. Sometimes one gets "caught up" in a local work to the extent that he forgets about his desire to go to the foreign fields. It happens, and often. But if it does, then maybe it's for the best. That first desire and love for foreign work may not have been as strong as it should have been. Better to lose it in a local work in the States than to lose it while on the mission field. So really, the local work period in the States may be a blessing. If a family, though, really wants to do foreign mission work, usually nothing will or should hold it back.

## B. MISSION STUDIES

Any missionary who goes into a foreign field without doing some studies in mission methods is going to run into more than one brick wall. It must have been an egotistical missionary who said, "It's foolish to study, because the more we study, the more we discover our ignorance." And the more

missionaries study mission methods, the more ignorant they find that they are in this whole area of study. There may be nothing more dangerous on the mission field than an unprepared American missionary. We need to prepare for mission work, **thoroughly prepare!**

Here are two suggestions on how one can prepare himself for foreign mission work:

**1. Take mission courses in a school:** There are a number of colleges and schools of preaching now which offer training in missions. A prospective missionary should try to attend as many mission workshops or seminars as possible. A lot of ground can be covered here. And a lot of trouble can be avoided on the field over there by just taking the time to sit at the feet of an experienced missionary.

**2. Private studies:** If one is in a situation where he cannot attend or enroll in courses on missions, then he can resort to private studies. There are a hundred and one books on mission methods, biographies, anthropology, and so on that one can read. Read as many as possible.

I would like to say something here that really needs to be thoughtfully considered. And I want to say this in the context of this point. A lot of times we spend years in getting a degree in missions but end up doing no degree of mission work. What good are our thorough studies in missions if we can't get people into Christ? Somewhere here, there has to be a balance. One doesn't have to have a masters in missions to move souls to the Master. But on the other hand, it's good to have a masters in missions. I'm not against thorough preparation at all. But I do think some people spend more time preparing to go to the field than they actually do working on the field. We should spend time and sweat in preparing to go. Don't go unprepared. But let's remember that preparation is not our final purpose as missionaries. Our purpose is to evangelize. And all the preparation in the world is worthless if we do not do that.

Something else needs to be added here also. We need to stay humble when we study mission methods. Thorough schooling in mission methods does not mean we're thoroughly knowledgeable of all methods. Missionaries sometimes have a problem here with "their" methods. They think that "their" method for doing such-and-such a work is best. That seems to be a pitfall of those missionaries who get hung up on a particular method of work.

But there's something unique about mission methods that all experienced missionaries know. Methods are as fluid as water and as changeable as a woman's mind. We should never stereotype any mission method or the situation on any mission field. Few methods are universal axioms. What works here may not work there. What works this year may not work next year. More than one newly arrived missionary has thrown his "mission manual" in the garbage can after being on the field for a couple of years.

I said all that to say this, let's thoroughly prepare for being the best ambassadors for Christ we can. But let us not forget the mission of Christ. The purpose of mission studies is to prepare us to do a better job. And our job isn't just to study mission methods. Our job is to **evangelize**. And let's keep humble while we are doing it.

### C. CULTURAL STUDIES

Ever hear the story about the American missionary who kept waving good-bye to his visiting national neighbor, and his neighbor never would leave? Somebody hadn't told the missionary that in that specific culture the sign (cue) for saying good-bye was what Americans do to say, "Come here," and the sign for "come here" was the American cue for "good-bye." That may illustrate the need for cultural studies.

Of course, this fits in with the preceding point. One should thoroughly study the culture into which he is about to leap. It may be too hot, and as soon as he jumps in he may

jump right back out. I know of some who, after a study of the prospective culture, decided they just could not make it in that particular culture. Therefore, they chose another country. Let me continue this thought in the next point.

#### D. SURVEY TRIPS

Survey trips save money and missionaries. The church as a whole could save thousands and thousands of dollars annually if we would just put more into practice the idea of making advance survey trips to the proposed field of labor. I know of one missionary couple who, with a sponsoring elder, went to visit the prospective field of labor. After they, the missionary and his wife, saw the field, they decided that they just could not live there. And they didn't. In fact, they decided they just could not live anywhere outside of American borders. Here, as well as in many other similar situations, the church was spared thousands of dollars by investing just a few hundred dollars for a survey trip.

Survey trips are really a necessity. How is one going to thoroughly prepare for a given field without seeing the culture and feeling the needs of the people? If one decides after a survey trip that he cannot make it there, that's better than his moving to that country at great effort and expense, and then after a year or so, returning to the States. Survey trips are one of the best investments for a successful mission effort.

But too, let me say something as a warning here. One should not expect to learn everything about the field in a two-week survey trip, or even in cultural studies while in the States. Survey trips are valuable, but they are also limited. So are cultural studies in the States. They offer a great leap in giving one an understanding of the prospective field of labor, but they are only the beginning to that understanding. A true understanding of the culture and country will only come after years of labor on the field.

## E. LANGUAGE

Another good thing to do before going to the mission field, if you have the time and the opportunity, is to study linguistics or the language of the field to which you may be going. Of course, one never learns the language beforehand as fast or as well as he does when on the actual field. But any time spent in language study before departure to the field is time saved on the field. Once one does arrive on the field, he should dedicate at least the first six months **exclusively** to language study. This is very difficult to do, but absolutely essential. Such will encourage a long stay on the field, as well as greater effectiveness while there.

## F. BIBLE STUDY

This was touched on in a previous point. I want to emphasize it here. What good is a missionary who doesn't know the Book of Life? Every missionary should thoroughly "know" his Saviour. And no one can truly know his Saviour without knowing His word. This point is really more important than anything else. A good knowledge of the Bible is a necessity in mission work, an **absolute** necessity.

The Word of God works in us (1 Thess. 2:13) to build us up (Acts 20:32) and to produce faith (Rom. 10:17). But a man who does not have the Word of God in his own heart and life surely cannot get it into the heart and life of another person.

But again, let me caution here. Too many prospective missionaries have said that all they needed in order to do mission work is a head full of Bible. That is true to a certain point. A head full of Bible is necessary. But one can certainly do a better job preaching and teaching that head full of Bible to others if he uses his head. And using our heads includes careful preparation. We can save ourselves a lot of frustration and pain on the mission field if we'll just take time to do some preparation in mission methods and cultural studies

before going. Learning how to communicate the Word of God across cultural boundaries is no small task. We should acquire all the help we can get to make that task more efficient.

The thoughts of this chapter are only general. But it is hoped that the reader, if he or she is considering foreign mission work, will be stimulated to patiently prepare for it. Good preparation always removes stumbling blocks; it is like asphalt laid on a rocky, dirt road; things are made so much smoother.

## Chapter 10

# GOING AS A GROUP

The previous chapter should apply to everyone who is going to a foreign field. The following points relate to those who are going as a group. There are some things newly formed groups in the States might consider before they actually make their move to the field. Even in forming a group there are some things that are good to keep in mind. The following are my suggestions along this line.

### A. ORGANIZE BEFORE GOING

The key factor in the success of any group effort is good organization. And the time to start working on that is in the States before embarking. It would be good if committees were formed and responsibilities were given while on U.S. soil. This would sure help, not only in getting the team off the ground, but also in determining how the members are going to be able to work together. If one specific member can't make it in the organizational structure at home, he undoubtedly will not be able to make it on foreign soil. And it would be better for him to turn in his resignation at home than on the field.

Of course, in forming the organization at home there will be some committees of work which will not be applicable on the field. And then, there may be those responsibilities on the field for which someone must be assigned, for example, language committee, housing committee, etc. But still, the place to begin organization is in the States. While in that friendly culture things can be worked out which could not be worked out while under the stress of a foreign culture.

And I don't think a group can ever overplan. All members need to meet to iron out methods and goals. There are going to be disagreements and those disagreements need to be ironed out. If large differences can't be worked out at home, I do not believe they will be worked out over there, on the field. There will always, though, be minor disagreements. But it's those big ones that disrupt a smooth-sailing ship. We must learn to live with the little ones. We may not be able to live with the big ones, though. It would be good to discover those big ones while in the States.

## B. ESTABLISH CLOSE COMMUNICATION

By this I mean to establish inter-communication among group members by letter, or by telephone, or by newsletters, or by whatever. Just communicate with one another. I will mention other forms of communication in the following points. But here, one must not under-emphasize the importance of establishing and maintaining communication between group members while in the States. Where there is no communication of ideas, there is usually confusion, or at least doubt. The big advantage of close communication is the sharing of ideas. And team members should thoroughly know one another's ideas. Communication also perpetuates the group itself. Enthusiasm is stimulated. Concern is not allowed to die. And dreams and visions are kept clear and distinct.

## C. SPEND TIME TOGETHER

One of the main things to be ironed out in a group effort is to determine if the members can really sit in the same saddle. This is called compatibility. Group members should make a dogged effort to get to know one another before they go. They should know one another to the extent that they can be open and frank in discussion without splitting up. And the only real way they can accomplish that while in the States is to spend a lot of time together. It would be better to dis-



cover and attempt to resolve those personality clashes before going to the field, than to discover them after you get there. If two cannot go it together, then they should go it separately. And, it would be good to determine that early in the formation of a group.

#### D. MISSIONARY-ELDER RETREAT

I mention this separately from the above points because this cannot be regular. Usually it is a onetime thing. It would be good if all the elders of sponsoring churches and missionaries of the newly organized team had a special retreat together. This would bring the elders of the different sponsoring churches together. And that's important in team work. Outside speakers could be brought in. Special subjects related to group missions could be discussed. Such an effort would be well worth the time. Those who have done such say that it is a most rewarding experience.

#### E. BEGIN SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Usually, the team organization is formed around the talents that the members already have. But what if there is a need for an area of work that no one has the ability to do? I'm thinking specifically about pilots, ham radio operators, radio broadcasters, etc. There is a long list here of specialties that need to be considered. A ham radio, for example, is a jewel when you're secluded between Somewhere and Nowhere. I would advise that every group effort have at least one ham radio operator . . . and a ham radio, too. If extensive leadership training by extension is going to be done, there may be the need for an airplane. Somebody had better learn how to fly . . . with an airplane, of course. And just the area of leadership training by extension is a science. Those members who are going to be engaged in such a work should thoroughly prepare themselves in this field of study.

In other words, every group member should sharpen up on key talents. And the best time to do that is in the States. You won't have time on the field.

### G. SET A DEFINITE DATE

As a last suggestion here, I would like to re-state what has been stressed by others who have gone to the field as a group. This point is that a group which is forming in the States should set a definite date of departure. This will offer no few advantages. Everyone can work toward that date, not only in completing education but also in raising funds. And, this would also help members of the group and their relatives to prepare psychologically for the move. Setting a date would also prevent the departure from lingering on and on and on until the group just vanishes into the night "of other opportunities."

Every group should thoroughly prepare for the task before it. Good preparation by the individual members and the group as a whole will save many frustrations. The place to begin organization is in the States. The group that does its groundwork in the States will surely reap favourable benefits.

But our principle imperative is to go. Whether we go as a group or on our own, we must go! The going is not under question. We really don't have a choice since going to all nations with the gospel is a command of our Lord. But how we go is our choice. Whether we go over our backyard fence or over the oceans, the main thing is that we go with love and with the message of the gospel. That's what Christianity is all about. And that's where group evangelism shines brightest. It is an effective manner of going. It is a valid means to accomplish our end. And our end is to glorify God through the preaching of the gospel of His Son.

## **TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GROUP MISSIONARIES**

- I. Thou shalt love thy fellow group member with all thy heart, even when he disagrees with thee.
- II. Thou shalt respect the wishes and opinions of thy fellow group member at all times.
- III. Thou shalt do unto thy fellow group members as you would have them do unto you.
- IV. Thou shalt remember that thy purpose is to evangelize and not communize.
- V. Thou shalt determine to have a cooperative spirit and live in harmony with thy fellow Christian.
- VI. Thou shalt not try to rule well thy fellow group member's house, his spouse, his children, or his life.
- VII. Thou shalt not be envious: of the good works of thy fellow group member.
- VIII. Thou shalt not gossip about thy fellow group member or his family.
- IX. Thou shalt not desire to have thine own way at all times.
- X. Thou shalt pray daily and fervently and rely upon God and His Word for strength.

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